

DOCTOR WHO

ENDGAME

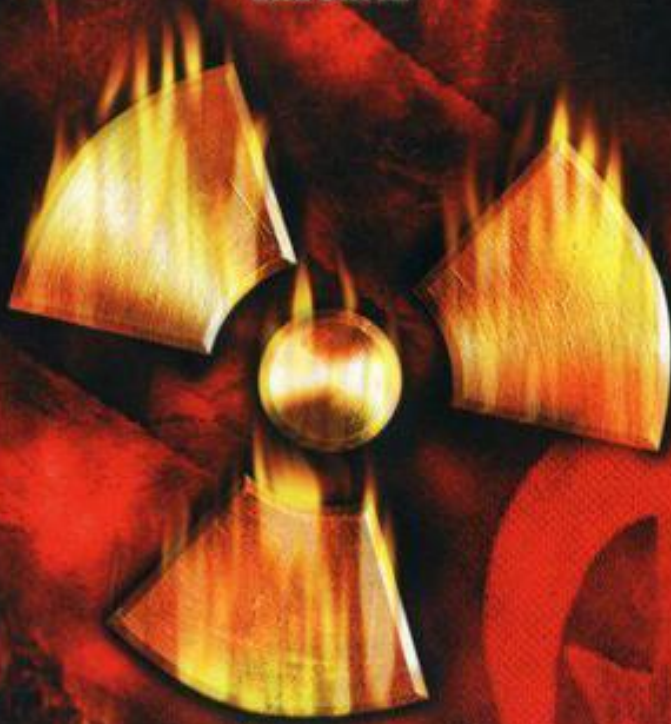


TERRANCE DICKS

BBC

DOCTOR WHO

ENDGAME



TERRANCE DICKS

Winning is everything – and nothing.

Losing is nothing – and everything.

All that matters is the game.

The Playeers have decided on an Endgame. Play ends only when one side has been annihilated – even if the entire planet is destroyed in the process.

They weren't expecting the Doctor to be one of the pieces – and neither was he. He really doesn't want to get involved.

The Doctor doesn't know who he is – but he's fast ceasing to care. Caught up in ennui, nothing seems to matter to him any more. He has no interest in the Cold War, in spies or double agents or secret documents.

But he's soon forced to take an active role. Because as far as the authorities are concerned, the Doctor is The Third Man. . .

DOCTOR WHO

B B C

ENDGAME

TERRANCE DICKS

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*with particular thanks for Vladék's dropping-in and the Countess's
conversion.*

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Prologue One

'So then, is it our wish to proceed to an Endgame?' The voice was old, dispassionate, infinitely remote. 'Axel?'

A man's voice, harsh and cruel in the echoing darkness of the void.

'An

Endgame! I weary of this primitive planet. Let us assist its barbarous inhabitants to destroy themselves.'

'Myrek?'

A whining, pedantic voice answered this time. 'An Endgame, by all means. I am experimenting with new techniques I wish to test.'

'Helga?'

A dull flat voice. 'I stand with Myrek.'

'As always. Countess?'

A woman's voice, low and musical. 'I am outnumbered, it seems. An Endgame, if you must – though we risk the waste of a perfectly good planet.'

'Exactly so,' said the old voice. 'Consider this, all of you. With atomic weapons involved, an Endgame may result in the destruction of this entire world.'

There was no emotion in the voice. The point was raised merely as an

interesting technicality.

'It need not come to that,' protested the second female voice. 'I have some affection for this world. We have played many Games here, it has afforded us much amusement.'

'We have played too long on this petty planet,' said the arrogant male voice. 'I weary of it. What does it matter if we make an end?'

'The universe is infinite, and there is an infinite number of planets,' said the detached old voice. 'One planet more or less is of little importance to us.' A pause. 'Very well, then. As adjudicator, I declare an Endgame. Play ceases only when one side or another has been annihilated. You may work together or alone, co-operate or compete. But always work through others. The hand of the Player must never be seen. Now. The Credo.'

Five voices rose as one in the eternal night-darkness:

'Winning is everything – and nothing

Losing is nothing – and everything

All that matters is the Game.'

1

Prologue Two

A small dark man and a tall dark-haired girl were drinking tea and eating buns at a Festival of Britain refreshment stall. The man ate little, enjoying the atmosphere and the company. The girl wolfed down buns as if she had not eaten for a week.

Faint hurdy-gurdy sounds floated towards them along the river. Dusk was falling and coloured lights gleamed in the hazy distance. The clouds had thinned to wisps of smoky vapour, and the rain of the day had left only damp pavements and the freshness of the air.

The Doctor turned to the stall owner. 'What's that music?'

'And what are those lights?' asked Ace.

The little man looked up from polishing a grimy glass and stared at them in amazement. 'Where you bin?'

'You'd be surprised, mate,' said Ace.

'Got a funfair, haven't they?' said the stall owner. 'Over in Battersea Park.' He grinned. All these years of post-war austerity, now it's all festivals and funfairs!

Funny old world, innit? Mr Churchill says it's a waste of money, but it's about time we had some music and merriment again, I say.'

'I like funfairs,' said the Doctor. He looked at Ace. 'Do you like funfairs?'

'Yeah. Why not? Come on, Professor.'

They said goodbye to the coffee-stall man and strolled away.

Suddenly the Doctor stopped and turned.

Ace stopped as well, following the direction of his gaze.

A tall young man had just come out of the Dome of Discovery. Ralph Tubbs's building sat like a flying saucer in the middle of the South Bank Site.

'You know,' the Doctor said quietly, so that only Ace would hear, 'by your time only the Festival Hall will still be here. Nothing lasts forever' He was still looking across at the man leaving the Dome. 'It's sad, isn't it,' he added, and Ace wondered if he meant the inexorable hunger of Time or the man standing alone.

The man was looking about him now, as if wondering where to go next. He wore an old corduroy suit, his hair was unfashionably long, and he was quite extraordinarily good-looking. His eyes were piercingly bright. They were deep with experience, intelligence, and more besides.

'Someone you know, Professor?' There was something familiar about him, Ace thought. As if he was someone she had once met, long ago. In another time, and 3

another place.

The Doctor hesitated for a moment, then shook his head.

'No. For a moment I thought I felt a flicker of recognition, but there's nothing there. Nothing at all.'

The tall young man seemed to sense that they were looking at them. He looked back at them, as if he too wondered if he knew them. Ace thought that she had never seen anyone look so sad.

She smiled at the young man and he half-smiled back.

The Doctor moved away, and Ace followed him.

The young man watched them walk away along the misty riverbank together; on towards the lights and the music.

Father and daughter; he wondered idly? Uncle and niece perhaps? Mismatched lovers? In any case, they looked happy together.

It must be nice to be happy.

For a moment he considered following, moving towards the funfair; perhaps getting to know them. After all, the girl had smiled at him. . .

He decided against it. What would be the point?

What, after all, was the point of anything?

He turned and drifted towards the Hungerford Bridge.

4

Chapter One

Exiles

The Hungerford Bridge was in darkness. The only illumination was the light from the South Bank reflecting off the water beneath. Vladek could see every ripple of the oily water, every tiny wave running up the Thames as he looked down.

He had to look down, because he was being held over the side of the bridge by his feet. The two men holding him, one to each leg, were built like bears.

Russian bears. Vladek could not close his eyes, only stare down at the river below him. He could smell the stink coming off it as it mingled with his own sweat and fear. He could smell the cheap aftershave of the man holding his left leg, and hear the slight grunt of effort as the man on his right leg shifted his grip slightly.

The voice was calm, reasonable, terrifying. 'Just tell us where it is,' as if this were a simple request. As if the man were asking for directions to Liverpool Street.

Vladek tried to shake his head. But he could already feel the blood

pounding in his temples, making his vision blur. For some reason he was desperate to keep focused on the rippling water beneath him. On the framework of the bridge. On the breakaway strands of his own greying hair that hung down and swayed on the edge of his vision. On anything.

A bead of sweat was running along his nose, making it itch. But his arms were too heavy for him to reach up and wipe it away. He waited for it to drip into the water, hoping he would not follow it on its way. A single droplet lost forever in the mass of water. Gone forever.

‘We know you have it,’ the voice was saying. ‘We know you took it. You thought you were so clever, didn’t you. Poor Polish exile manages to get a job as a cleaner at the Embassy.’

There was the sound of a match being scraped along the sandpaper strip. A flare of noise, and silence as the man lit his cigarette. Then the tiny splinter of wood dropped still smoking past Vladek’s face. He struggled to lift his head, to look up. And saw the round, pale face of his interrogator looking down at him. Amused.

‘But we knew, Vladek. We have always known who and what you really are.’

5

The man smiled, as if in sympathy. ‘So when the document went missing, it was easy to know where to come. Just tell us where it is, and we can all go home. Forget about this evening’s. . . events.’ He leaned over the bridge towards Vladek, blowing smoke through his nose. Like a dragon. ‘What do you say?’

Vladek had not the strength to spit far. The gobbet of saliva arced pathetically towards the man’s face, reaching its apogee well short, then falling towards the Thames. ‘Never!’ Vladek shouted after it. His voice was an equally pathetic gasp. ‘I shall never tell you.’

‘Never?’ The man feigned surprise. ‘Then there is little point in continuing our discussions. If you will never tell us, then there is no reason for us to keep you alive.’ He cocked his head to one side, as if explaining elementary algebra to a slow child. ‘We might as well. . .’ He paused to unglue the cigarette from his lower lip. ‘. . . Drop you.’ And dropped the red-tipped *Players* into Vladek’s upturned face.

Vladek screamed and twisted as he felt the burning tip scrape by his cheek.

‘Won’t tell!’ he gasped out over what teeth they had left him.

The man sighed and straightened up, disappearing from view. His voice floated back down to Vladek. ‘Let go of him, Rurik.’

The grip on his left leg was suddenly released, and Vladek swung with a scream of terror. He was held only by one foot now, and he could feel the big man’s grasp failing already.

‘Last chance, I think, Vladek.’ The voice came out of the swirling, spinning darkness. It seemed to come from the water itself. ‘Tell me, and we’ll let you go. A simple deal.’

‘Oskar!’ Vladek heard himself shouting. ‘I gave it to Oskar!’ And even as he said it he felt relieved, knowing that it was all over. How could he have not seen it before. They would get the document from Oskar, and everything would be all right. They would let him go.

Let him go.

‘All right, Boris,’ the voice said. It was harder now, edged with satisfaction.

‘You can let him go.’

Vladek was still screaming as he hit the water.

Oskar was half-way across the road when the black cab swung round the corner and sped straight towards him. Its front wheel splashed through a puddle, sending a spray of water across the pavement. Oskar dived rather than ran from the taxi’s path, showing surprising speed and agility for a man of his age and bulk. He hit the ground with his shoulder and rolled over, gasping for breath. The taxi shot by, so close that the wind of its passing snatched at his clothes. He sat up in time to see the taxi vanish around the 6

next corner, its tyres squealing on the wet tarmac. Oskar speeded its passing with a string of Polish curses, clambered to his feet and staggered painfully to the pavement.

‘Nice try,’ he thought. ‘But not quite good enough.’

Waving away the attentions of concerned passers-by – ‘No, no, thank you, I am fine!’ – Oskar dusted himself down and stood for a moment lost in thought. Given its lack of success, the incident in itself was not unpleasing.

They were serious, then, and professional as well. How ingenious to use a taxi – what could be more anonymous than one of London's black cabs? Best of all, the attempt on his life proved the value of his information.

It also proved that it was too dangerous to go it alone any longer. The next attempt might well succeed. He must find an ally, a collaborator. Not one of his old associates in the network, they would be automatically suspect.

Somebody detached. Oskar pulled thoughtfully at his bushy white moustache and ran a flat hand over his close-cropped white hair.

Then he smiled. He had thought of the perfect candidate. Someone without ties, without background, without history. The most detached man Oskar had ever known.

Rubbing his bruised shoulder, and limping a little, Oskar set off for the *Café des Artistes*.

In an office in the Russian Trade Delegation in Highgate, a thin sharp-faced man called Krychov surveyed his crestfallen subordinates. Large as they were, one big the other even bigger, they looked like naughty schoolboys up before the headmaster, hoping desperately it wouldn't come to a caning.

'There are three things wrong with this operation,' he announced. 'Firstly, it was completely unauthorised. It did not have my official sanction. That might have been forgiven, had it succeeded. Secondly, it did not succeed. It failed miserably.'

'It was all on the spur of the moment, like,' protested the bigger thug. 'We were tailing Oskar, like you said, and we saw this unattended cab. Driver gone down the toilets for a – well, gone down the toilets.'

'That's right,' said the smaller thug. 'We saw this cab and we thought,

"Hullo!"'

'Do not think!' snarled Krychov. 'You are not authorised to think. You have not the necessary qualifications. You are the blunt instruments of the Soviet State, no more.' He drew a deep breath. 'Thirdly, the plan was completely stupid. You will kindly explain how you hoped to recover the missing document by running the man down in a stolen taxi.'

‘Easy,’ said the big thug. ‘Knock him over, rush up to see if he’s all right, search the body, take the document.’

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‘And suppose he isn’t carrying it?’

‘Then you search his rooms – which is a lot easier if he’s dead because he won’t come in and interrupt you.’

‘And what if the document isn’t in his rooms either? What if he’s hidden it somewhere, or given it to a friend to look after? And you don’t know where it is – *and you can’t ask him either, because you’ve already bloody well killed him!*’

There was an unhappy silence.

‘Now, perhaps you see the principal flaw in your plan?’ said Krychov with icy sarcasm. ‘Good. Here are your instructions, and make sure you do not exceed them. Continue to follow Oskar, and make note of his contacts. At a suitable time, determined by me, you will pick him up and bring him here.

Alive! Then you can take him down to the cellar and exercise your persuasive skills. Understood?’

Dumbly, the two thugs nodded.

‘Good. Then get out of my sight!’

Blissfully unaware of his newly acquired status as Oskar’s helper, the tall, brown-haired young man pushed open the cafe doors and made his way to a quiet corner table. He still wore his brown corduroy suit, but the faded jacket was unbuttoned to reveal a once-gaudy waistcoat beneath. Now it was looking tired and a little threadbare. Not unlike its owner. He sat quiet and alone, staring off into space through eyes that were at once incredibly young and alive, and at the same time full of world-weary experience.

Penny, the plump, blonde-haired waitress saw his entrance, and hurried over to him. ‘Coffee, Doctor?’ She gave him her most flashing smile.

The Doctor smiled back politely. ‘And a ham sandwich, please.’

Penny went back behind the counter and set the coffee machine in

motion.

Monica, her fellow-waitress, thin, dark and shrewish said, 'You're wasting your time with that one.'

'Don't know what you mean,' said Penny haughtily. She cut a particularly large and succulent slice of ham and began to prepare a sandwich.

Monica gazed across the crowded café at the Doctor sitting quietly in his corner. 'I don't think he's interested in women.'

Penny raised an eyebrow. 'What are you insinuating?'

'I don't mean he's one of them,' said Monica hurriedly. 'Though Lord knows he's pretty enough. It's just that he doesn't seem interested in anyone. Just sits there and lets everything float by.'

'He's a gentleman at any rate,' said Penny. 'Not like some of these others.'

No danger of getting your bottom pinched when you bend over to put the coffee down!

'Worse luck!' said Monica. 'Like I said, he's not interested.'

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'I'll get him interested one of these days,' said Penny. 'If I don't, he's just not human!'

She picked up the Doctor's ham sandwich and coffee and carried them over.

'Had a good morning, Doctor?' She studied him critically. 'You look tired, you've been working too hard. You should take some time off.'

'I took some time off yesterday,' said the Doctor unexpectedly. 'I went to the Festival of Britain.'

'Was it nice? I've been meaning to go.'

'It rained rather a lot, but it was interesting. I like festivals and funfairs. At least, I think I used to. . . '

'Well, if you fancy another visit sometime. . . '

‘It was interesting,’ repeated the Doctor. ‘But I don’t think I’d want to go again.’ He sipped his coffee. ‘Thank you, Penny.’

As Penny flounced away the Doctor glanced round the crowded little café.

It was busy as always, with people gossiping and arguing in all the tongues of Europe. In a table by the window two elderly Russians played the latest in a never-ending series of chess-games, oblivious to the racket all around them.

Poles, Germans, Hungarians, Yugoslays were locked in noisy and unending political debates.

The Doctor liked the *Café des Artistes*. He felt at home there. One of the regulars had nicknamed the place the *Café des Exiles*. It had been opened just before the war by a Viennese who had left Austria one jump ahead of the Nazis, and had soon become a second home for his fellow refugees.

After the war a second wave of exiles had arrived, this time in flight from communist Europe. Old Otto the founder was long-gone, but his son Franz kept up the ancient traditions. Today, in 1951, the café still had its ancient and volcanic *espresso* machine, imported at great expense before the war. You could still get excellent sandwiches, cheesecake and *sacher-torte*, and find all the Continental newspapers waiting for you on wooden holders. You could still sit all day over a cup of coffee, setting the world to rights from your own particular political standpoint.

Strange how the extreme left and the extreme right seemed to meet in the middle. Both produced totalitarian states, secret police, labour camps, suppression of opinion – and a crop of exiles. Some of his fellow customers were refugees *because* they were communists, while others were refugees *from* communism. They all seemed to get along well enough.

Perhaps it was a fellowship of the oppressed.

It occurred to the Doctor that he hated tyranny and oppression. Or was it that he *used* to hate tyranny and oppression? It didn’t seem to matter much any more.

Nothing did.

The Doctor looked up as a burly white-haired old man threw open the café door and stood peering around the room. He spotted the Doctor and came over to him, delivering a hearty slap on the shoulder.

‘Doctor! The very man! We must talk.’

The Doctor winced. ‘Of course we must, Oskar,’ he said. ‘We talk every day.’

Sit down and have a coffee.’

Oskar threw himself heavily into a chair. The Doctor turned, waved to Penny and pointed to Oskar.

Penny nodded and started preparing a double *espresso*. ‘Don’t know what the Doctor sees in that smelly old Pole,’ she grumbled.

‘Oskar’s all right,’ said Monica tolerantly. ‘Watch out when you take that coffee over, though. He’s one that *will* pinch your bum.’

At the Doctor’s table, Oskar leaned forward confidentially. ‘I have information, Doctor. Information of vital importance.’

This was typical Oskar. Every day he discovered a new conspiracy, uncovered another plot. The old man was full of excitement and expectation, every day a new adventure. It was why the Doctor liked him. He had a vague idea that he had once possessed such qualities himself. He could still warm himself at the fire of Oskar’s enthusiasms.

‘What is it this time, Oskar? The battle plan of the Chinese Army? Or are you about to take your rightful place on the throne of Poland?’

The old man was a member of one of the innumerable Eastern European exile groups, determined to regain control of their beloved countries. Supported by occasional grants from America’s Central Intelligence Agency or Britain’s Secret Service, they held meetings, printed pamphlets and ran Freedom Radio stations. Sometimes they despatched idealistic and ill-prepared agents to Moscow to blow up the Kremlin or assassinate Stalin. Since these unfortunates were invariably rounded up and shot immediately on arrival, they did little harm.

Oskar shot the Doctor a reproachful look, opened his mouth, then closed it again as Penny arrived with his *espresso*. He aimed an automatic bottom pinch as she put down the coffee, but his heart wasn’t in it, and Penny avoided him with ease. She smiled forgivingly

at the Doctor and went back to the counter.

Oskar sipped the strong black coffee. He put down his cup and leaned forward again. The Doctor noticed that his hand was shaking as it still held the cup.

‘You mock me, Doctor. But this time it is serious. They tried to kill me!’

‘Who?’ said the Doctor with a frown. ‘How?’

‘Who?’ Oskar shrugged. ‘Who knows? As for how, they used a car, a black cab. It is always better if these affairs appear to be accidental.’

He spoke with detached professional admiration.

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The Doctor looked thoughtfully at him. ‘Oskar, are you telling me you nearly got run over crossing the road? Is that what this is all about?’

‘It was deliberate, I tell you. The taxi was *aimed* at me – but I was too quick for them.’

‘Where did this happen?’

‘Not far from the Museum. Just outside the Golden Eagle.’

The Doctor sniffed gently, catching the faint aroma of brandy that mingled with the smell of coffee. Nothing unusual about that, Oskar always carried a faint aroma of brandy.

‘Were you by any chance coming *out* of the Golden Eagle when this accident happened?’

‘As it happens I was,’ said Oskar with dignity. ‘But I was not drunk, and it was no accident!’

‘Whatever you say, Oskar.’

The old man glanced round conspiratorially and lowered his voice.

‘I am in possession of a document of great importance. It came into my hands by chance.’

‘What’s in this document?’

‘I have no idea, I have not opened it.’

‘Then how do you know it’s important?’

‘Because the man who was originally carrying it was killed. He fell off a bridge in the middle of the night when he should have been at home, warm in bed. And people have been trying to kill me since it came into my possession, since he gave it to me for safe-keeping. He feared for his life, and now I fear for mine. In my opinion the document contains vital information – information which concerns the peace of the world.’ Oskar looked round furtively. ‘If I am to trust you, Doctor, then you must trust me.’

‘But I do trust you.’

‘Then tell me – *who are you with?* ’

The Doctor smiled. ‘I’m with you, Oskar.’

‘What group, what organisation? MI5, MI6. CIA?’

‘I’m not with anybody.’

Oskar gave him a tolerant smile. ‘Doctor, please. Do not insult my intelligence. I am an old hand in these matters.’

‘Oskar, I cannot imagine what makes you think –’

Oskar interrupted him. ‘I will tell you. You appear from nowhere and take up residence amongst us. You have no history, no background. You don’t even have a name.’

‘Yes I do,’ said the Doctor calmly.

‘Well?’

‘It’s Smith. Dr John Smith.’

11

‘Of course it is!’ said Oskar scornfully. ‘To me it is obvious.’

‘What is?’

‘You are an agent in the deepest of deep cover. So deep that you must retain total anonymity. A cover story can be broken, revealing the truth behind it.

But if there is not even a cover story, if there is nothing –’ Oskar shook his head in reluctant admiration. ‘There is nowhere for investigation to begin!

Brilliant!’

The Doctor sighed. ‘You’re incorrigible, Oskar. Think what you like.’

Oskar gave another of his conspiratorial looks around, then he leaned towards the Doctor, his voice low and urgent.

‘I beg you, trust me, tell me who you are with. The merest hint will suffice.’

‘There is nothing to tell,’ said the Doctor. ‘Nothing at all. I am with nobody.’

Oskar sat back, triumphant. ‘Of course! That proves I am right. An agent of your calibre confides in no one. That’s why I know I can trust you.’

The Doctor sighed. ‘You don’t give up, do you? For the last time, Oskar, I’m not with anyone. I have no confidences to confide. Believe me, I’m alone.’ As he said it the Doctor realised again how true it was. ‘Quite alone.’

Oskar studied his face and surely saw the desolation in the Doctor’s eyes.

‘Very well, Doctor. But you will help me? I ask you as a friend.’

The Doctor shook his head. ‘I’m sorry Oskar. I’ve finished with politics and causes and crusades.’

He glanced at the old man’s saddened face and then looked away.

Oskar stood up. ‘I must go, I have work to do.’ He looked down at the Doctor. ‘I too am sorry, Doctor. Sorry for you. A man who has no causes is no longer alive.’

He turned and made his way out of the café.

The incident was already fading from the Doctor's mind when he left the *Café des Artistes*. It was a pity to upset old Oskar – but did it really matter? Soon some new worldwide conspiracy would turn up to occupy his mind. And as for the assassination attempt. . . No doubt the old boy had staggered out of the pub after one of his morning sessions, weaved his way out into the traffic with a head full of brandy and politics and given some unlucky taxi-driver the fright of his life.

A harsh croak of 'StarNoooserStan *derd!*' broke in on his musings.

The Doctor stopped, fished a penny from his pocket and held it out.

The news vendor, a wizened old man in the traditional cloth cap and white muffler, regarded him scornfully.

'Which?'

'Which what?'

'Which paper? Star, Evening News or Evening Standard?'

'Oh, anything.'

Snatching the Doctor's penny, the old man thrust a Star into his hand. They were always the hardest to get rid of, and if the customer didn't care. . .

The Doctor wandered on, pausing at the next corner to study the front page.

The Korean war was bogged down in the usual stalemate and a prominent American politician was calling for the use of the atom bomb. Overcome by sudden disgust, the Doctor tossed the paper in the nearest bin and went on his way.

It was none of his business after all. But then again if they blew up the planet. . .

Even that didn't seem to matter very much.

The Doctor spent the afternoon in the Reading Room of the British Museum studying Sumerian History. He speed-read volume after volume, with the familiar sensation that he was not so much absorbing information as re-discovering it.

The Doctor and his studies were a source of some fascination to the Reading Room assistants. One day it would be Egyptology, the next

quantum mechanics. The works of Socrates might be followed by the theses of Einstein.

13

‘If we knew what you were looking for, Dr Smith,’ said one bespectacled maiden lady severely, ‘it would help us to assist you.’ She peered over her horn-rims at him as if suggesting his homework was late.

The Doctor gave her a sad smile that made her heart flutter for the first time in years. Her glasses slipped a fraction further down her nose.

‘If I knew it would help me as well,’ he said. ‘The trouble is, I won’t know till I find it!’

He could hardly tell her that study, even such random study as this, was the only thing that seemed to alleviate the bleakness that filled his soul.

When the Reading Room closed, the Doctor made his way back to his basement flat. It stood in a quiet Bloomsbury back street, not far from the *Café des Artistes*. It was a small, simple affair, sitting room, bedroom, kitchen, all furnished with cheap utility furniture. Its only unique feature was the use of a small cellar – it had been the wine cellar before the tall old house was divided into flats. He had lived there now for almost a decade, gradually getting used to the fact that other tenants came and went, other tenants went about their ordinary lives. Other tenants got gradually older, greyer. . .

It was because of the cellar that the Doctor had agreed to an exorbitant rent that was now up to five pounds a week.

The Doctor went down the steps into the basement area and unlocked the front door. He passed through the tiny hall into the shadowy living room –

the flat was always gloomy even by day. But he was finding that the shadows suited his mood more and more.

From the living room he went into the kitchen and unlocked the wooden door in the far wall. He switched on a light, which revealed a short steep flight of stone steps. The Doctor went down the steps, switching on yet another light at the bottom.

A bare bulb dangling from the ceiling revealed a small cellar with whitewashed stone walls.

In the middle of the cellar stood a tall blue box. If you stood slightly sideways to it, you could almost make out a texture, like a woodgrain running through the material it was made from. Almost. Just as there were shadows, tricks of the light, that made it appear that the box was panelled. Near the top, there was a sort of lintel that extended out slightly beneath a raised roof or lid. Around it were vague shapes and squiggles that might once have been letters, faded with time.

The Doctor went up to the box, stretched out his hands and placed both palms flat against the door. He stood there, silent and waiting for an incredibly long time.

Then, all at once, he pushed his fingers against the middle of the front of the box, jamming his nails into a tiny groove that ran full length down it. He 14

pulled, and one side of the front swung open – a door. A door that opened to reveal. . .

. . . An empty box. The interior was dark, and empty, and dead.

The Doctor stood, staring into the void for several minutes. Then, at last he turned away, his face filled with bleak despair. He closed the door of the box.

Turning out lights behind him, he went back up the steps, and locked the cellar door. He went into the sitting room and flung himself into an armchair.

He sat there motionless while darkness gathered around him.

In one of a set of modest offices in Ryder Street, a fresh-faced young man called Jimmy Melville was working through a set of buff files. They were piled high on one side of his desk, and he worked methodically, taking a file from the top, examining its contents, then passing it to another pile to his right. As the pile on the left slowly diminished, so the pile on the right slowly grew. Occasionally the man put one aside, on to another pile, or made a note of some point of special interest. But for the most part he read, thought, moved on.

It occurred to him that if he had known how large the checking of files loomed in the work of the Secret Intelligence service he would have chosen some more exciting occupation – like being a bank clerk.

He looked up as a stooped white-haired man came into the room. Like many of the old hands, Colonel Peters, his immediate superior, had come to MI6 by way of the Indian Police. The Colonel attached great importance to well-kept files.

‘Anything special, Jimmy?’ His voice was as old and frail as his body, dry and reedy and thin.

‘Not really, sir, just routine. This missing document story is still floating about, but there’s nothing solid.’ Melville cleared his throat in an effort to expel the dust that seemed to permeate the papers – even, somehow, the new ones.

‘Heard the news?’

‘What news is that, sir?’ Not that he was really interested.

‘Kim Philby’s back.’

‘I thought he was in Washington, liaising with the CIA, or whatever it is he does.’

‘He was. Still is, as far as I know. But he’s back temporarily. Coming to us here as a matter of fact. We can squeeze him in for a few days, can’t we?’

‘I’m sure we can, sir.’

The Colonel lowered his voice so that it was only an octave higher in pitch than Melville’s. ‘He probably wants to get away from Washington until things cool down.’

15

Melville gave him an amused look. Like many of the older officers, Colonel Peters was an incorrigible gossip. Jimmy Melville sometimes felt that the Secret Services were more riddled with rumour and speculations than the proverbial girls’ school. He decided to indulge the old boy.

‘Until what things cool down?’

‘Well, have you heard of Guy Burgess?’

‘Yes, sir.’

But the Colonel continued as if Melville had denied any knowledge at

all.

‘He’s in the Foreign Office. Terrible feller. Looks like an unmade bed, drinks like a fish, and if you ask me, none too clean. On top of all that. . . ’ The Colonel looked embarrassed. ‘Well, he’s not what you could call manly, if you see what I mean. Bit effeminate. . . One of those, if you see what I mean.’

‘You mean he’s a poof, sir?’ asked Melville innocently. It was not exactly a state secret.

The Colonel cleared his throat. ‘Well. . . anyway, for some reason the Foreign Office sent Burgess to Washington as well.’

‘How did he get on, sir?’

‘Blotted his copybook good and proper. Drunk all the time, didn’t do any work, insulted ambassadors’ wives, got caught speeding. . . Trouble was, he was staying with Kim all the time. They were up at Cambridge, together, and Kim hoped he could straighten him out. Anyway, Burgess got sent home in disgrace and now Kim’s coming back too. I reckon he wants to stay well out of Washington till all the fuss about Guy has died down.’

‘Can’t blame him, sir. Look, sir, this missing document thing? We’ve had a team on him for some time. I’ve been reading their reports. Would you mind if I looked into it a bit personally? So long as it doesn’t interfere with doing the files, of course, sir.’

Colonel Peters considered. ‘Don’t see any harm. What do you want to do?’

‘There’s this old fellow called Oskar, sir, big man in the Polish community.’ Melville’s enthusiasm was showing through in the speed he was talking.

‘There’s a whisper he knows something about this document, whatever it is.

The thing is, I know Oskar, and there’s a chance he might talk to me. If I fix up a meeting. . . ’

Colonel Peters considered, nodding slowly as if the idea were just coming to him unaided by Melville’s suggestion. ‘You could fix up a meeting,’ he said slowly. ‘Yes, give it a try. If that doesn’t work, then try tailing him for a while.

You might pick up something useful about his contacts – and in any case, it'll be good practice for you!’

‘Thanks a lot, sir,’ Melville said, safe in the knowledge that sarcasm was wasted on his superior. ‘If you don’t mind, I’ll get on to it right away. . . .’

16

Grabbing his trenchcoat, Melville hurried from the office. He’d call Oskar and fix up a meeting. If that didn’t work then he would adopt the Colonel’s suggestion and follow the old bugger about all night.

Anything was better than the files. . .

Late that evening the Doctor came to and became aware that he was hungry.

He rose and stretched and went out of the flat, locking the door behind him.

He climbed the steps into the street and stood hesitating for a moment.

He decided against the *Café des Artistes*. He didn’t much want to meet anyone he knew. Especially Oskar.

There was a British restaurant a few streets away where he could get a meal of sorts. The Doctor made his way there. Once inside he sat at an oilskin covered table and ate greyish slices of roast beef with watery mashed potatoes and overcooked cabbage. To follow there was cardboard-tasting apple pie and weak coffee.

The Doctor scarcely noticed. These days he didn’t much care what he ate or drank. He was vaguely aware that it was necessary to eat and drink in order to live.

Why it was necessary to live he wasn’t sure.

He called for the bill, paid the few shillings for the meal and left sixpence tip.

The spring dusk was falling as the Doctor turned into his street. He would go to bed soon, he decided, and listen to the radio. Sometimes music helped.

Perhaps he would sleep this time.

And tomorrow, another day in the Reading Room.

‘Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow. . .’

Who had said that to him?

No, not said, *read*, read out the newly-written line with great pride.

The Doctor had a sudden flash of a crowded tavern, of a bearded figure at an ale-slopped table, scrawling on parchment with a quill-pen.

He shook his head to clear it. He had these fleeting visions from time to time. Bits from old films, perhaps? Not that he went to the cinema much. And the recollections were always immediate and vivid as though he was *there* –

which was impossible. They were in colour – did they have colour films yet?

Not many, he was sure. The visions didn’t mean anything – except, perhaps, that he was finally going mad.

That didn’t matter either. Madness might be a relief. Provided it was only North-North-West.

As he reached his flat, he was wondering how characters in black and white films could ever find their way round the tube. But his thoughts were inter-17

rupted as a bulky figure appeared out of the shadows, and a familiar aroma of brandy floated on the evening air.

He heard a hoarse whisper. ‘Doctor!’

‘Oskar? What’s the matter now?’

‘You must help me Doctor. I am a hunted man. All evening I have been followed.’

The old man was half-drunk, and wholly terrified.

The Doctor sighed. No doubt Oskar had been wandering from pub to pub all evening, fuelling his paranoid fantasies with brandy.

‘Come on Oskar, go home and sleep it off. You’ll feel better tomorrow.’

‘My rooms are watched, I dare not go home. Please, Doctor, let me stay with you, just for tonight.’

The Doctor thought of a night listening to Oskar’s drunken ravings and shook his head decisively.

‘No need for that, Oskar. Just clear off home will you, I need my sleep.’

‘Doctor, please!’

‘No, Oskar! Go home. I can’t be a party to your inebriated paranoia. Go home and sleep it off, and wake up at peace with the world.’

The Doctor turned away.

As he descended the steps to his front door he heard a car draw up close by.

He heard car doors flung open and the odd indeterminate sounds of a scuffle.

He heard a strangled cry cut short by the thud of a blow.

The Doctor paused for a moment and then turned and went back up the steps.

A black limousine was parked nearby, all its doors wide open.

Two burly men in black overcoats were dragging a wildly-struggling Oskar towards the car. A third man, taller and thinner than the other two, stood by the driver’s door, watching. To the Doctor’s annoyance, he seemed to be enjoying the show.

At the sight of the Doctor, Oskar screamed, ‘Please, Doctor, help me. They’ll kill me!’

Suddenly a gun appeared in the thin man’s hand. He slammed it across the old man’s forehead. Blood spurted and Oskar fell back, semi-conscious, into the arms of his captors.

The thin man turned back to the Doctor, a thin smile fixed to his face.

‘Keep out of this,’ he said in flat accentless tones. ‘It does not concern you.’

It was good advice, thought the Doctor. After all, what business of his

was it if Oskar's paranoid fantasies suddenly came to life? And besides, the thin man had a gun. The Doctor frowned. He didn't like guns. It occurred to him that he didn't much like people who carried them or people who hit others with 18

them. Still, better not interfere. It was really none of his business. Besides, what could he do against three men, one of them armed?

The interesting thing, the Doctor noticed in a strangely detached way, was that while his mind was having this entirely logical reaction, his body was moving rapidly towards the struggle.

He reached the thin man in three swift strides.

The thin man was saying, 'I warned you!', was raising his gun as if in slow motion towards the Doctor's face.

The Doctor's left hand swept it aside, while the long fingers of his right hand clamped down on the thin man's scrawny neck.

The thin man gasped and went rigid, dropping the gun from paralysed fingers. The Doctor kicked the weapon under the car and let the thin man slump to the ground.

One of the two remaining thugs released his hold on Oskar, and came at the Doctor in a savage rush, arm drawn back for a blow.

The Doctor reached out and took the upraised hand in both of his own and made a complex circular movement that ended with him balanced on one knee in the gutter. The thug flew across the pavement, slammed against the basement area railings and thudded to the ground.

The Doctor had a sudden vision of a many-armed, glowing-eyed being in a misty cavern somewhere immensely far away.

'Well done, Doctor,' it said. 'You're beginning to get the hang of it!'

A monster? No, a mentor – and a friend.

But how could you be friends with a talking monster? He blinked in confusion.

Once again the Doctor's reflections were interrupted, this time by the third, the last remaining thug. Casting Oskar aside, the man thrust a hand inside his coat and produced a slender black object. There was a

click and a long thin blade appeared.

The Doctor said disapprovingly, 'A flick-knife? Don't you realise those things are *illegal*? At least, I think they are. They certainly should be.'

The thug lunged at the Doctor the way they'd taught him in training school, thumb on the blade and strike upwards. That way you come in under the ribs and get the heart. His arm swept up, but the Doctor wasn't there.

His wrist was caught and twisted and the knife dropped from his grasp. His feet were swept from under him and the back of his head struck the pavement with a thud. . .

The Doctor looked down at his unconscious opponent.

Apparently he could *do* things as long as he didn't think about them too much.

19

'And thus the native hue of resolution Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought,' he murmured as he looked round at the bodies slumped on the ground.

The Doctor got another flash of that crowded tavern. . . 'Nice line, Will, go down well at Court. Bit abstract for the groundlings.'

He went to help Oskar to his feet – and saw that Oskar was staring over his shoulder in sudden alarm.

'Look out, Doctor!'

The Doctor turned and saw that the thin man, his first opponent, had recovered. He was launching himself at the Doctor's throat.

The Doctor gasped as bony fingers clamped around his windpipe. His clasped hands swept upwards breaking the stranglehold, and then came down and gripped the thin man's own throat. . .

He squeezed harder, harder and saw consciousness fading from the man's eyes. They were becoming glassy, bulging in terror as they stared back at the Doctor.

As the thin man sunk choking to his knees, the Doctor became aware that someone was grasping his shoulder, trying to pull him away.

He turned to deal with this new opponent and saw that it was Oskar.

‘Doctor, stop! You’re killing him!’

The Doctor gave him a puzzled look. Wasn’t it all right to kill people who’d been trying to kill you? Perhaps it wasn’t. . .

Loosening his grip, he heaved the thin man to his feet and let him lean against the car sobbing for breath.

Turning away, the Doctor grabbed one of the semi-conscious thugs from the pavement, dragged him to his feet and hurled him into the back seat. He threw the other thug after him and slammed the door.

The Doctor seized the thin man by the lapels of his overcoat, dragged him bodily to the still-open driver’s door and thrust him with a single heave behind the wheel.

‘Go away,’ said the Doctor quietly. His voice was low and dangerous. Emphatic. ‘Go away and don’t come back – ever.’

Watery eyes fixed on the Doctor’s face, the thin man closed the door. After a moment the engine turned over and the black car moved away.

Something gleamed in the road where the car had stood. It was the thin man’s gun. The Doctor picked it up and examined it with distaste. It was a flat, silver. 22 calibre automatic. He stooped and picked it up. He carried carefully across the road, holding it between his forefinger and thumb as if it were something extremely unpleasant. Then he dropped it down the nearest street-drain. It fell exactly between the slats of the grating without so much as a ping of metal against metal.

20

He didn’t like guns.

The Doctor put an arm around Oskar’s shoulders and helped him down the steps.

From the shadows at the end of the street, a thin figure in a trenchcoat watched them go. His hair was close-cropped and so fair that it contrasted with the oily black of his trenchcoat. His features were as thin as his face, pinched and angular. He stood for a few moments, hands deep in his pockets, collar turned up, watching the door to the Doctor’s flat.

Then he smiled, and nodded, and walked away. Fading into the evening.

He was gone before he reached the end of the street.

21

Chapter Three

Sleeper

‘Three of you?’ said the bulky man behind the desk. His face was a mask of surprise, his voice laden with disbelief. ‘All with weapons. Against one unarmed man?’

The thin man remembered the Doctor’s fingers around his throat. He swallowed dryly, painfully. It hurt to breathe.

‘He was highly trained. His combat skills were extraordinary.’ The thin man’s voice was ragged and husky. He rubbed at his throat despite himself.

The bulky man was Vasili Mikoyan, Cultural Attache at the Soviet Embassy.

Mikoyan was a ‘legal’, a Russian diplomat legitimately in the country. Like many such minor Embassy officials, he was also a high-ranking officer in the KGB.

The thin man was Krychov, employed at the Embassy as a Senior Clerk. The two thugs, Boris and Rurik, now being patched up in the Embassy clinic, were both listed as chauffeurs.

Mikoyan and Krychov were meeting at the Trade Delegation Headquarters in Highgate. The Russian Ambassador insisted that all covert operations, especially what the KGB called ‘wet work’, took place well away from the Embassy itself.

Oskar should have been there too, undergoing intensive interrogation about a certain missing document, but that part of the plan hadn’t worked out quite as expected.

‘This Doctor,’ said Mikoyan. ‘He is known to us?’

Krychov shook his head. ‘I made a preliminary check on my return, there was nothing. I will make a more thorough search of the archives tomorrow.’

‘Do so,’ Mikoyan agreed. ‘Now.’

Krychov rubbed his neck. ‘I respectfully suggest that he is a dangerous man.

He is clearly anti-Soviet,’ he added vengefully. ‘Whether or not we succeed in tracing his identity, he should be terminated without delay.’

Mikoyan’s fist slammed down on the desk, rattling the lamp and ebony desk set.

‘On no account. Fortunately for you, Krychov, your blundering has not been without fortunate consequences. We thought Oskar to be a lone eccentric, 23

who had stumbled on vital information by chance. It is now clear that he is part of something much bigger – and much better organised – than we originally believed.’

‘With respect, Comrade Colonel, I do not see –’

‘Is it not obvious? The Doctor is clearly a senior agent of considerable ability.

In my opinion he is Oskar’s Case Officer. Under pressure, Oskar panicked and fled to his superior for protection – thus exposing him to us!’

In Krychov’s opinion the Doctor was anything but a professional intelligence officer. He was something stranger altogether. But Comrade-Colonel Mikoyan was a man of determined opinions, and it wasn’t healthy to argue.

‘Your instructions, Comrade-Colonel?’

‘Search the archives, and any other sources, for any clue to the Doctor’s true identity. Meanwhile, keep him under surveillance. Perhaps he will lead us further. . . ’

‘And Oskar?’

‘Despite your actions and incompetences, the document may still be in his possession.’

‘It is certainly not in his rooms,’ said Krychov. ‘We made a most thorough search.’

‘Then it must still be on his person.’

‘Or hidden in a place of safety, Comrade-Colonel,’ suggested Krychov.

‘That is possible.’ Mikoyan considered. ‘Oskar must be seized and interrogated. Set up another snatch operation immediately – and see to it that this one does not fail. And remember – if this document is found, it is not to be opened, or tampered with in any way. It is to be brought straight to me. Only to me.’

‘It will probably be in code, Comrade-Colonel,’ said Krychov. ‘I have some experience in decoding, I might possibly be of assistance.’

‘You are not listening to me, Krychov,’ said Mikoyan gently. So gently that Krychov was in no illusion as to the danger he was in. ‘The contents of that document are not for such as you. If you succeeded in decoding it, you would then know more than is good for you. In that case it would not be this mysterious Doctor who would be terminated. Do I make myself clear, Comrade Krychov?’

Krychov shivered. ‘Totally clear, Comrade-Colonel. I shall go and make arrangements for the apprehension of the man Oskar.’

‘Take more men,’ advised Mikoyan. ‘From what you tell me of this Dr Smith, three was nowhere near enough.’

Despite Mikoyan’s warning, Krychov’s mind was busy as he hurried away.

Why was it so important that only Mikoyan became aware of the contents of this mysterious document?

24

Had he something to hide?

Knowledge was power in the KGB, especially knowledge of the sins of your superiors. Krychov knew that he would make a far better KGB station officer than Mikoyan. The man was too soft, too westernised. If he came across that document he would most certainly make a copy.

But first they must deal with Oskar.

‘Wiped the floor with the lot of them, did he?’ said the Colonel with amusement.

‘Very efficiently,’ confirmed Melville. ‘The Ivans cleared off much the

worse for wear, and this Doctor chap carted old Oskar down below.'

The third man in the room was tall and thin with a lined, quizzical face.

'I'm a b-bit at sea over all this, Colonel,' he said mildly. 'Someone care to fill me in?'

The three men were all members of the SIS, the Secret Intelligence Service, also known as MI6.

The tall thin man with the occasional stutter was Kim Philby, currently home for a few days from his post in Washington.

The Colonel nodded towards Melville. 'You're the expert on all this, Jimmy.'

'Right, sir.' He looked hopefully at the drinks tray on the Colonel's desk.

'Thirsty work, talking, sir.'

'Help yourself – and pour us all one.'

Melville poured three stiff whisky-and-sodas, and passed two of them round. The Colonel sipped his cautiously and put it down. Kim Philby drained half of his own glass at a gulp.

Melville sipped at his whisky and began. 'It all started a few days ago. There was a sudden whisper that the Ivans were after some some vitally important document. Whether it was theirs and they'd lost it or ours and they were after it wasn't clear. Anyway, it had gone astray somehow. Courier missing, handover bungled, all pretty vague actually. But then they started focusing on this old chap Oskar.'

'Who is he exactly?' asked Kim.

'Polish exile,' said the Colonel. 'Thick with all the freedom fighters and resistance organisations. Did the occasional odd job for us as well. Small time really by the Ivans' standards. Decent enough old boy though. Go on, Jimmy.'

'Rumour was Oskar had some sort of line on this missing document. Knew who had it, knew where it was, maybe even had it himself. The Ivans seemed to think so anyway, they put a team on him.'

'You say this Oskar occasionally worked for us. If he had anything

valuable, wouldn't he pass it on? Why not just ask him about it?'

25

'I did,' said Jimmy. He looked at the Colonel. 'After we spoke I set up a secret meeting in Regents Park, chalk-mark on third tree on the left, copy of yesterday's Times in the litter bin with the top right corner torn off. Oskar loved all that stuff.'

'And?' snapped Philby.

'Oskar denied everything. Said he'd heard the rumours but was as puzzled as we were.'

'Did you believe him?'

'No.'

'Why not?'

'He was nervous, suspicious. Not like himself at all, in fact. Old Oskar is fiercely anti-communist, very much on our side. This time he didn't seem to trust me any more than the Ivans. Seemed to think he couldn't trust anybody.'

He kept on muttering about traitors and moles.'

'Go on,' Philby prompted, finishing his drink and reaching to pour another.

'Well, all this time we'd had a team on him as well. For a few days they'd just been watching the Ivans watching Oskar. The Ivans just kept him under surveillance at first, probably waiting for some kind of contact. When nothing happened, they got impatient and tried to take him out. The old black cab hit and run technique. Tonight they changed tactics again. They turned over his rooms and left men there waiting for him. Oskar got wise somehow, and headed for this Doctor instead. I was tailing him myself by this time, as you suggested, Colonel. Anyway, just as he arrived at this Doctor's flat, they tried a snatch. The Doctor put a stop to it and took Oskar in.' Melville shrugged.

'That's the story so far.'

Kim Philby finished his second whisky-and-soda, looked to the Colonel for permission, leaned forward and poured himself another. He looked

enquiringly at the two others who shook their heads.

He took a swig of whisky. 'This Doctor, where does he fit in?'

'Nowhere, as far as we can see,' said the Colonel. 'We ran a preliminary check when his name cropped up and he doesn't seem to exist. Not on our files, not on official records anywhere. There are several John Smiths, as you can imagine. But none of them match his profile. Fellow must be a Sleeper.'

'With respect, sir, I'm not so sure,' said Jimmy. He looked at the two older men. 'What's the first thing you do when you plant a sleeper? Write him a legend. Get a top-class fake passport, or better still a real one for someone who died young. Provide a history, an identity that checks out all the way down the line. Back it up with papers, letters, documents. . . '

'We do know the procedure, Jimmy,' said the Colonel drily.

'Sorry, sir. But you see what I mean? This chap simply hasn't bothered with a cover story. He turns up out of nowhere, rents a flat near the Museum.

26

Spends all day in the Reading Room, lives quietly, eats in cheap restaurants.'

'Hard to check a man's story when there's no story to check,' said the Colonel, unconsciously echoing Oskar. 'What do you think, Kim?'

The thin man finished his second whisky and poured himself a third.

'Hard to know what to think. All we c-can do is keep watching. Oskar, this Doctor, the Russians. . . Something's b-bound to break.'

Old Kim's more concerned than he makes out, thought the Colonel. That stutter's a dead give-away. Wonder what he's not telling me? What really brought him flying back here from Washington?

Jimmy Melville yawned and stood up. 'If you'll excuse me, gentlemen, I'll try to get a few hours sleep. There's a cot in the duty room. I'll set up those surveillances first thing tomorrow, Colonel.'

Melville went out and the Colonel poured another large whisky for Philby and a small one for himself.

‘So what brings you back to us, Kim? Thought you were stuck in Washington on Anglo-American liaison.’

Philby took a swig of whisky. ‘So I am. Turned out one or two of the liaison problems were happening at this end. I’ll need a day or two to sort them out then I’ll be on my way back.’

The Colonel chuckled. ‘I hear you had a hard time over there, trying to keep Guy out of trouble.’

‘I had a singular lack of success,’ said Philby wryly. ‘Even had him living in the basement of my flat for a while. Made not the slightest bit of difference.

Just meant he threw up on my c-carpet instead of his own.’

‘I understand he pinched the French ambassador’s wife’s er, posterior,’ said the Colonel.

‘Amongst others. The last straw was when he got *three* speeding tickets on the way home from some drunken party and had the cheek to claim diplomatic immunity.’

The Colonel suppressed a smile. ‘Always was a bit of a handful, old Guy.

And now they’ve sent him home in disgrace.’

‘Thank God. You can have him and welcome,’ said Philby forcefully.

The Colonel smiled. Then he said, ‘Seen Donald recently?’

Philby frowned. ‘Donald Maclean?’

‘Understood he was an old friend of yours.’

‘So he is. No, I haven’t seen him. Haven’t had time yet. Why?’

‘Talking about Guy reminded me. Seems he’s been having a spot of the same trouble.’

Philby nodded. ‘I heard rumours. What happened?’

‘Went clean off the rails in Cairo, started hitting the bottle. Finished up by breaking into some American girl’s flat, stealing her whisky and wrecking the 27

bathroom.'

'Donald?' said Kim incredulously. 'Surely not.'

'American Ambassador filed a formal protest, Donald got sent home. They decided he was suffering from stress and overwork, put him on sick leave, sent him for some kind of psychiatric assessment. Only just started work again.'

'Is he all right now?'

The Colonel shrugged. 'Seems to be. He's cut down on the drinking anyway, by all accounts.' He chuckled. 'Just listen to me rambling on. Terrible thing, gossip!'

Kim Philby drove back to his borrowed flat in Albany with a good deal on his mind.

He was worried about the increasingly reckless behaviour of Guy Burgess.

Charm and talent had kept Guy afloat for a long time. Somehow it seemed that even his most disapproving superiors had a soft spot for him. Even in the repressive climate of the time, his homosexuality, still technically illegal, was tolerated, if pursued with discretion. Unfortunately, Guy's increasingly drunken behaviour meant he was no longer discreet about anything.

Even more worrying was the Colonel's story about Donald Maclean.

A far more buttoned-up type than the reckless Guy, Donald too was under enormous strain. It showed itself in increased carelessness and in occasional outbursts of drunken rage.

Why did that old fool keep harping on about Guy and Donald? thought Philby angrily. Could he possibly suspect?

It was all too possible, he told himself. Despite his bluff old-soldier airs, the Colonel was no fool. And on top of all that there was the Oskar crisis – the real reason for his departure from Washington.

Unless the missing documents were found soon – and found by Philby alone

– the consequences would be disastrous.

And finally, there was this mysterious Doctor.

Somewhere, Kim Philby had heard that name before. . .

Oskar woke in a panic, realising he was in a strange bed. Then he relaxed, realising that it belonged to his friend the Doctor.

How kind of the Doctor to insist that he, Oskar, took the bed while the Doctor slept on the sofa. How good of the Doctor to fight off, single-handed, the thugs who had come to kidnap or kill him. He owed the Doctor his life.

And how thoughtless he, Oskar, had been to involve his friend in danger that was none of his concern.

Oskar lay wrestling with his conscience for a time, but there was only one possible conclusion. While Oskar was in the flat, the Doctor was still in danger.

28

Sooner or later his enemies would return in force. This time, knowing his capabilities, they wouldn't engage the Doctor in hand-to-hand combat. They would shoot him down from a safe distance and carry Oskar away.

There was, Oskar decided, only one honourable course. He must leave now and draw the enemy away from the Doctor.

He slipped out of bed, dressed quietly, and tiptoed through the sitting room, his boots in his hand. The Doctor lay on the sofa, silent and motionless like an effigy on a tomb. He seemed not so much asleep as in a trance.

Oskar went to the door and unlocked it, slowly and carefully, and closed it quietly behind him. He sat on the steps and pulled on his boots and then crept up to the pavement.

It was very early, just before dawn. Oskar strode confidently along the empty pavement, the sound of his boots ringing out in the silence.

He would visit one of his friends in the Polish underground, Bazyli perhaps or Casimir. He would borrow a little money and leave London, leave the country maybe. With Oskar gone his friend the Doctor, and his secret, would be safe together.

Then the black limousine turned the corner and drew up beside him. The engine purred menacingly in the still of the night. The headlights

cut through the darkness, illuminating Oskar as he started to run.

The doors were flung open and six, not three but six men jumped out. They hit the pavement running, closing on Oskar. They were younger, faster, more vigorous than he was.

The seventh man, the thin-faced one who had been in charge last night sat behind the wheel, watching. A thin, cruel smile stretched tightly across his face. Forming a circle, the six men closed in on Oskar. He backed away, but whichever way he tried to go, one of them was waiting. Smiling.

This time there was no Doctor to help him.

29

Chapter Four

Snatch

The Doctor awoke from a few hours' troubled sleep feeling unusually stiff and uncomfortable. After a moment he realised why. He was sleeping on the sofa, a piece of furniture about as comfortable as the rack.

He stretched and sat up, recalling the events of the previous night. He'd patched up the cut on Oskar's head, and given him a cup of strong sweet tea, refusing to listen to Oskar's confused babble of explanations, his hints about world-shaking secrets.

'I'm glad I could help you, Oskar, but that's it,' the Doctor had said. 'I'm not joining any resistance movements or secret societies, and whatever your secrets are I don't want to know them. I refuse to get involved – all I want is a quiet life.'

'And I don't even want that very much,' he thought to himself.

'Doctor, you are involved,' protested Oskar. 'Since you have helped me, they will think you are on my side.'

'Well I'm not,' said the Doctor firmly. 'I'll give you a bed for the night and tomorrow you must take your story to the proper authorities.'

'What authorities?' scoffed Oskar. 'If I go to the police they will think I am mad.'

The Doctor resisted the obvious comment. 'The security services then.

I know a man called Greene who might help. I expect he'll remember me, if he's still around.'

'It is not safe,' whispered Oskar dramatically. 'My enemies are everywhere, even inside the secret service!'

'I'm sorry, Oskar, I just don't want to hear any more.'

He'd hustled the old man into bed, ignoring his protests. Fortunately the effects of the stress of near abduction, a day's intake of brandy and a knock on the head all took their toll. Within minutes Oskar was sprawled out on the Doctor's bed, snoring loudly.

The Doctor had thrown a blanket over him and taken to the sofa.

He rose and stretched, looking towards the bedroom. Things were strangely quiet. The Doctor went over and opened the door. Oskar had gone.

With a feeling of mild relief, the Doctor closed the door.

31

He went into the tiny bathroom, coaxed the ancient Ascot gas boiler into life and ran a hot bath, soaking the aches from his body.

'Perhaps I'm getting old,' he thought. 'But then, how old is old for me?' He spent a few moments standing in front of the cracked mirror searching his head in the hope of finding a grey hair. Just one would be a start. A symbol of normality in his abnormal life. But he knew there would not be one. For the Doctor the unusual had become run of the mill. Boring.

Wrapped in a towel he went back into the bedroom and sorted out clean clothes. Ready to go out, he straightened the crumpled bed – and saw the corner of an envelope peeping out from beneath the pillow.

The Doctor reached down and took it out. The envelope was long and thin, made from bluish-grey paper. It was completely blank and it crackled slightly between his fingers.

The Doctor sighed. Oskar had gone, but he had left his secrets behind.

'Top secret,' muttered the Doctor. 'Burn before reading!'

He could set a match to it, of course.

He could tear it to bits and flush the scraps down the toilet.

Or he could simply give it back to Oskar next time he saw him and tell him not to be so daft.

Tucking the envelope into an inside pocket, the Doctor left the flat.

At his desk in his office in Ryder Street, Kim Philby pressed his intercom. There was a buzz and Jimmy Melville's voice came from the outer office. 'Sir?'

'How's the surveillance on the Doctor going?'

'Routine, sir. Came out of the flat this morning, breakfast in a nearby café

– one poached egg on toast – and proceeded to the British Museum Reading Room. He's been there all day.'

'And this Oskar chap?'

'Not a sign of him, sir. Either he's still in the Doctor's flat, which doesn't seem likely, or he slipped out before the surveillance was set up. We've got a man on the flat just in case. Oh, and the Ivans are onto the Doctor as well, sir.

Their team and our team keep bumping into each other.'

'Are they watching the flat as well?'

'No sign of them so far, sir.'

So maybe they know where Oskar is, thought Philby. Out loud he said,

'Keep on watching the flat, and the Doctor. And let me know as soon as Oskar surfaces.'

'Right, sir.'

Philby leaned back in his chair, trying to relax his mind. He was attempting to trace a fugitive scrap of memory. A mysterious, solitary, anonymous figure 32

known only as the Doctor. . . Suddenly it came to him. A report he'd read quite some time ago.

He pressed the intercom button, twice this time. An upper-class female voice said, 'Yes, sir?'

'Get onto Central Registry, will you, Felicity? Ask them to send over the Turing file that Greene compiled in the mid-forties. Top priority, if you would.'

Krychov sat in the basement kitchen of the Highgate house drinking Russian tea. He was trying to ignore the ugly sounds – thuds, grunts, the occasional muffled groan – that came through the open door to the cellar below. They echoed up the stairs, difficult to blot out entirely.

Such things were unfortunately necessary from time to time. But there was no need for a civilised man to take part in them, or even to witness such scenes. There were animals like Rurik and Boris for that.

Krychov sipped his tea with a sigh of satisfaction. He had been incredibly lucky. He had been approaching the Doctor's flat with an augmented snatch squad, one large enough to overcome even the Doctor. The members of the squad were equipped with the newly-issued silenced weapons. Their orders were not to grapple with the Doctor but to shoot him on sight.

Fortunately none of this had been necessary. Approaching the flat just before dawn, an excellent time for a raid, they had seen Oskar walking along the road. It had been simplicity itself to scoop him up and throw him into the car.

Dismissing the snatch squad, except for his two chief assistants, Krychov had carried Oskar off to the house in Highgate.

A swift search had established that the document was not on his person.

All that remained was to establish where it was hidden. It could only be a matter of time. Oskar was tough but he was old, he couldn't hold out much longer. Boris and Rurik were experts at their work, as the sounds from the cellar attested.

But then, suddenly he was aware that the sounds from the cellar had ceased.

It was over then. Krychov imagined the admiring look on Mikoyan's face, the praise his superior would surely heap upon him when he handed over the document – after having made his own copy, of

course. Promotion, perhaps even a medal. He heard heavy footsteps on the cellar stairs and looked up expectantly as Rurik came up into the kitchen.

‘Well,’ he asked, safe in the satisfaction that he already knew the answer.

‘Did he talk?’

Rurik shook his head. His feet shuffled nervously, and he looked down at the floor, as if trying to see into the cellarage below. ‘No,’ he admitted quietly.

‘He did not talk. He died.’

33

* * *

Placidly the Doctor followed the quiet routines of his day. Breakfast, the Reading Room, lunch, then more Reading Room. Around him a pattern of watchers crossed and recrossed in cars, on foot, on bicycles. The Doctor knew they were there of course. He could have described each and every one of them pinpoint accuracy. But he ignored them. As long as they left him alone they could trail him as much as they liked. Good luck to them. He had no secrets. Well, except from himself.

When the Reading Room closed, the Doctor made his way to the *Café des Artistes*. Once he’d found Oskar and given him back his envelope this whole thing would be over. Oskar must take his chances after that. It was not a cruel or heartless decision – it was very simple. The document, whatever it was, meant a lot to Oskar. But it meant nothing to the Doctor. Each according to his own level of interest and commitment, the Doctor decided. Everyone and anyone was free to determine their own priorities. And that, he thought ruefully, was something he would struggle deliberately to defend.

He entered the crowded café, still alone with his thoughts, and took his usual corner table. Soon Penny came hurrying over with a *cappuccino* and her most seductive smile.

‘Anything to eat, Doctor?’ she asked huskily. ‘We’ve got some nice cheesecake in. If you fancy a nibble.’

‘Cheesecake would be fine,’ he answered without looking up. ‘Have

you seen Oskar at all?’

Penny sighed. ‘Not so far, Doctor. He’s usually here by now. Don’t suppose he’ll be long.’

Sipping his *cappuccino* and munching on cheesecake the Doctor waited –

and waited. . . and waited.

But there was no Oskar.

No ‘Doctor, my friend!’

None of those hearty slaps on the shoulder that used to irritate him so much.

After his third *cappuccino* and his second slice of cheesecake the Doctor gave up. He paid his bill, said goodbye to Penny and went out of the café.

It was possible that Oskar had gone on the run. If so, good luck to him. But that still left the Doctor with the envelope. He could destroy it – but somehow that seemed like evading a responsibility.

He could hand it over to the authorities – but Oskar had said the authorities couldn’t be trusted.

He could open it and then decide. . .

The Doctor shook his head decisively. Opening the envelope would mean involvement, and he was finished with being involved. Wasn’t he?

A harsh chant of: ‘Starnooserstan *derd!*’ interrupted his thoughts.

34

He found himself in front of the wizened little man in cloth cap and muffler.

This time there was a second chant.

‘Final edition, final edition. ‘Orrible murder, ‘Orrible murder.’

The Doctor fished out his penny and held it out, barely looking at the man.

The old man glared at him. 'Which one?' he asked suspiciously.

'The one with the 'orrible murder please.'

The old man snatched the penny, thrust an Evening News at him and resumed his chant 'Starnooserstan *derd*, Starnooserstan *derd*. 'Orrible murder,

'orrible murder.'

The Doctor found the news item in 'Stop Press' on the back page. It had just made the final edition.

'The body of an elderly man has been found on a building site close to the British Museum. He had been brutally beaten. Police have formally identified the body as that of one Oskar Dolinski, a Polish exile well known in émigré circles.

Police say the motive for his murder may have been political.'

The Doctor's powerful hands crumpled the paper into a tight ball and hurled it to the ground.

'Ere!' said the newsvendor indignantly.

The Doctor swung round to face him and the old man recoiled. Clutching his satchel of papers he scurried away.

'It was 'is eyes,' the old man said later, describing the incident to a friend in the pub. 'Something in his eyes. Just for a moment, it was like he didn't look

'uman.'

35

Chapter Five

Rescue

Krychov was having his interview with his superior, Mikoyan. It was going very differently from the way he'd hoped and imagined.

'You *killed* him?' said Mikoyan incredulously. 'The one man who might have lead us to the missing document – and you killed him?'

'Boris and Rurik killed him,' corrected Krychov nervously.

‘I suppose they just got carried away?’

‘Not at all, Comrade-Colonel. They are most meticulous in their work. The man Oskar was obstinate – and he was old. His heart gave way under the stress of the interrogation.’

‘Whereupon you ensure maximum publicity for your error by dumping the body on the nearest bombed-site.’

‘That was not done by my orders, Comrade-Colonel. While I was trying to get in touch with you, Boris and Rurik panicked and decided to get rid of the body without delay.’

Mikoyan sighed. ‘What is done is done. You have one chance to redeem yourself, Krychov.’

‘What is that, Comrade-Colonel?’

‘The Doctor, you fool. Oskar’s last-known contact. Either Oskar passed him the documents or he told the Doctor where they were hidden. Pick up the Doctor and get the truth out of him.’

Mikoyan waited until his subordinate had crossed the room and was at the door, until he was feeling the relief that the meeting was ended, before he added: ‘And Krychov. . . ’

He hesitated at the door, hand on the handle, sweat on his palm. ‘Yes, sir?’

‘Try not to kill him before he provides you with the required information.’

Kim Philby closed the Alan Turing file and sat back, rubbing his eyes. It really was the most extraordinary document. Greene’s report was as remarkable for what it left out as for what it included. And it did little to clear up the mystery of the man who called himself the Doctor.

Nevertheless. . .

Philby pressed the intercom and Melville’s voice crackled back.

37

‘Sir?’

‘Is the Doctor still under observation?’

‘Currently heading back towards his flat, sir,’ Melville’s voice replied. ‘He left the Reading Room and spent some time in the *Café des Artistes*. I think he was waiting for Oskar.’

‘So it seems that he doesn’t know Oskar’s dead?’

‘He didn’t. But he does now, sir. Bought a paper on the way home. Very big reaction.’

Philby considered this. ‘Where is he now?’ he asked.

‘Just a minute, sir.’

There was the crackle of an intercom and then Melville said, ‘Post office, sir.’

He ducked in suddenly, took everyone by surprise. He’s still in there now.’

Philby came to a decision. ‘Bring him in.’

‘Sir?’

‘Bring him in. Peacefully if you can, but by force if you have to.’

‘Right, sir.’ There was no mistaking the enthusiasm in Melville’s voice, even through the crackle of the intercom.

‘And be careful, Jimmy. Remember what happened to those Russians. The Doctor’s a very dangerous man.’

The Doctor used a sputtering post office pen to write ‘Dr John Smith’ on the front of Oskar’s grey envelope. The result was blotchy and smudged but legible. He added the address of his basement flat, stuck on a stamp and slipped the envelope into an internal post box.

On the way out of the post office he noticed a thin man standing on the pavement outside. The man was wearing a bowler hat and carrying a furled umbrella. His eyes glanced off the Doctor’s as they both stepped forward, apparently about to collide. The Doctor stepped aside, smiling politely, to allow the man to pass. The man smiled back pleasantly, touching the edge of his hat.

Yet somehow, despite the apparent understanding between the two men, the thin man still managed to blunder against the Doctor in the doorway.

As they disentangled themselves with mutual apologies, the Doctor felt a sharp pain in the calf of his leg. He looked down in time to see the end of the umbrella withdrawing, out of sight. The Doctor stumbled slightly, clutching at his calf. He recovered, and turned. But the thin man had already vanished.

The Doctor wandered on for a few more steps before he slid slowly to the ground.

As the Doctor fell the thin man appeared at his side and knelt beside him.

In the same moment a black cab drew up on the pavement and two large men got out.

38

‘I’m afraid my young friend has fainted,’ explained the man in the bowler hat to concerned passers-by. ‘Drink, you know, drink and drugs. It’s very sad.’

Don’t worry, we’ll take him back to the clinic.’

The two men hauled the Doctor into the taxi, the thin man got in after them and the taxi sped away.

The Doctor awoke sitting on a heavy wooden chair in a cellar, his hands handcuffed behind him. It was a large, brightly-lit cellar with white-washed walls and several rows of empty wine-racks.

Two very large men stood looking down at him, and a thin man in a bowler hat stood a few paces away.

The Doctor looked round and saw a smear of blood on the whitewashed wall.

‘Is this where you killed Oskar?’ he asked conversationally.

‘It is where Oskar was interrogated,’ said the man in the bowler hat. ‘The killing was unintentional.’

‘Not much consolation for poor old Oskar,’ the Doctor said tersely.

‘He died because he was obstinate. Let his death be an example to you, Doctor.’

‘Oh it is,’ said the Doctor quietly. ‘Believe me, it is.’

‘Excellent,’ said the thin man. ‘All you have to do is answer our questions and we can all avoid a great deal of unpleasantness.’

‘How nice. Unpleasantness for whom, I wonder.’ The Doctor seemed bored.

He regarded the man in the bowler hat for a moment longer. Then he yawned.

Krychov laboured on. ‘First and most important is the whereabouts of the document that Oskar gave you. Since we found you in a post office, I assume the document has been posted somewhere. The question is, where?’

The Doctor sighed. ‘Anything else?’ he asked, looking at the ceiling.

‘In due course we shall want to know the service you work for, the names of your colleagues and so on. But all that can come later. First, the document.’

The Doctor yawned again. ‘I’ve no idea what you’re talking about.’

At a nod from Krychov, Rurik knocked the Doctor from his chair with a single backhanded blow.

Boris picked up the Doctor and dumped him back on the heavy chair. He sat slumped there, face blank, blood running from one nostril.

Krychov sighed and headed for the stairs.

‘I’m going upstairs to make some tea. Let me know when it’s over. And don’t kill him before he talks.’

‘Don’t worry,’ said Rurik. ‘The old man’s heart was weak. This one is strong, he will last for a long time.’

39

‘No sugar for me,’ the Doctor said politely. ‘Just a dash of milk if you have it.’

Boris knocked the Doctor out of his chair again. This time the chair went over as well.

The Doctor sat himself up. ‘Well, I suppose,’ he admitted, ‘that if it’s traditional Russian tea I could actually drink it black.’

Krychov went upstairs to the kitchen and put on the kettle.

Kim Philby glared angrily at the telephone in his hand.

‘They did *what*?’

‘Lifted him right under our noses, sir. Just outside the post office.’ Melville’s voice was apologetic. ‘The old poison umbrella trick. Taxi waiting, whizzed him away in a flash. Caught us on the hop rather, I’m sorry to say.’

‘Did you get a tail on them?’ Even as he asked the question, Philby was afraid that he knew what the answer would be.

‘Afraid not, it all happened too quick,’ Melville confirmed. ‘We were all on foot you see, sir. Ready to make the pick-up. We’ve got a list of places though, the ones they’re likely to use.’

‘Then get after them – and quickly. I want the Doctor back while he’s still in a useful condition. He’s no good to me beaten to a pulp. And I want that document.’

‘Sir.’

The phone went dead. Philby slammed it down and sat gazing into space.

If Melville was quick and lucky, there was still time, he thought.

And if the Doctor held out.

But he wasn’t hopeful about either.

With a terrible feeling of *deja-vu*, Krychov became aware that the noises from the cellar had ceased.

He put down his tea and sat listening, puffing nervously on his cigarette.

Heavy footsteps came up the stairs and Rurik appeared in the doorway.

‘Has he talked?’ asked Krychov anxiously.

Rurik shook his head.

‘He isn’t dead?’ Krychov’s voice was a hoarse whisper.

‘No,’ said Rurik heavily. ‘But he might as well be. Seems to be in some kind of trance. Doesn’t seem to feel anything, it’s a waste of time hitting him.’

‘Fetch him up.’

Rurik turned and went back downstairs. Moments later he and Boris reappeared, dragging the battered and apparently unconscious Doctor between them. They dumped him in one of the kitchen chairs.

40

Krychov studied the Doctor thoughtfully. His face was bruised and bloody and he appeared to be out cold.

He looked up at Rurik. ‘You’re sure you didn’t knock him out?’

‘No. He went like this more or less straight away.’

‘Auto-conditioning,’ said Krychov thoughtfully ‘Some kind of yoga, perhaps.

This man is very highly-trained.’ He drew on his cigarette, leaned forwards and touched the glowing tip to the Doctor’s face just below the eye. The Doctor’s body convulsed and his eyes opened.

Krychov gave a pleased smile. ‘However, as you see, the auto-conditioning can be overcome if the stimulus is sufficiently strong.’ He addressed the battered figure in the chair. ‘You cannot hope to evade our questions like this.

You merely force us to use more extreme measures.’

The Doctor ignored him.

‘We have not the proper equipment for extreme interrogation,’ grumbled Boris.

‘We have a gas-stove,’ Krychov pointed out. ‘We have fire, red-hot iron, scalding water. We must improvise.’ He did not relish the thought of such an interrogation. But he was angry with the Doctor, annoyed at the trouble he was being caused by this strange man. ‘Drag his chair over to the stove,’

Krychov said.

As Boris and Rurik moved to obey a voice spoke from the doorway. It

was unaccented, native English, well educated.

‘That’s nasty, really nasty,’ said Jimmy Melville reprovingly. ‘I’m surprised at you, Krychov.’

He stood in the doorway an automatic in his hand.

Behind him were more men, all armed.

Melville hurried over to the Doctor. ‘It’s all right, we’ll soon have you out of here, sir.’

Surprisingly, the Doctor stood up.

‘I wonder if you could take off these handcuffs,’ he said mildly to Melville.

Melville turned to Krychov ‘Keys!’ he demanded.

Krychov produced the keys and Melville took them and went behind the Doctor. He removed the handcuffs and stepped back.

The Doctor brought his hands in front of him and rubbed his wrists. He stood there for a moment between Boris and Rurik.

Jimmy Melville never forgot what happened next.

The Doctor’s body seemed to shudder, to vibrate with energy. His left hand flashed sideways into Boris’s side, his right struck upwards beneath Rurik’s jaw. Both blows were delivered so quickly as to be almost simultaneous, and after each you distinctly heard the sound of splintering bone.

41

The Doctor stepped back as Boris and Rurik fell, collapsing clumsily into each other.

Melville knelt to examine the bodies. He looked up, his face white with shock.

‘Somebody get an ambulance. . . ’

42

Chapter Six

Escape

The Doctor awoke in strange pyjamas, a strange bed and a strange room. He looked around.

He was in a hospital room. Hospital bed, bedside table with a small night-lamp burning next to a vase of daffodils. Bedside chair, visitor's chair. Striped Regency wall-paper with a few soothing flower-prints. One open door, leading to en-suite bathroom and toilet facilities.

Another door, closed, leading, presumably, to the outside world.

The Doctor got out of bed and stretched. He ached all over, but there was no serious damage. Boris and Rurik were skilled professionals.

The Doctor went over to the closed door and tried to open it. It was locked.

He looked round and saw a bell-push on the table. He put his thumb on it and held it there until the door opened and a pretty dark-haired nurse came in.

'You shouldn't be out of bed,' she said severely. There was a trace of Scottish in her voice. It made her sound more severe and reprimanding than she looked. 'In fact, you shouldn't be *able* to get out of bed.' There was a trace of admiration and surprise there as well.

'Why not?'

'When they brought you in a few hours ago you were pumped full of seda-tives. Not to mention having been badly beaten up.' She bustled round the bed, pulling the covers back.

The Doctor smiled, making no effort to get back into bed. 'I heal quickly. I hate to be obvious, but where am I?'

'I'm afraid I'm not allowed to answer any questions.'

'Then can I have my clothes please? I should like to go home.'

'I'm afraid that isn't possible either.'

'Isn't it?' asked the Doctor. He stepped swiftly past the nurse and flung open the door.

A very large man with close-cropped hair and wearing a dark suit was sitting on a chair outside. He was reading a newspaper. At the sight of

the Doctor in the doorway he jumped up and stepped back, slipping his right hand inside his jacket. It was an immediate reaction – a practised and rapid routine.

43

‘Please return to your room, sir,’ the man said. He was polite, but there was no mistaking the threat in his voice. Even so, at the sight of the Doctor’s piercing gaze, he added: ‘I should warn you, sir, that I’m armed.’

‘Of course you are,’ said the Doctor amiably. ‘Special Branch?’

The big man made no reply.

The Doctor nodded as if he already knew the answer. Then he went back into his room, closing the door behind him. He allowed the nurse to put him back to bed, and submitted meekly to having his pulse felt and his temperature taken.

‘How about something to eat?’ he asked when the thermometer was removed. ‘It’s been a very long evening and I missed my supper.’

‘I’ll see what I can do,’ she murmured. She seemed rather distracted, staring at the thermometer, and hesitating as to whether or not she should note down what his pulse had been.

After she had gone, the Doctor checked the charts at the end of his bed.

There were several scratched-out notes, as if whoever had made them had then changed their mind or decided they must be mistaken. Most of the standard boxes on the form – including pulse and body temperature – had been left blank.

The nurse returned later with a tray. Chicken soup, omelette, fruit salad and a jug of orange squash. Bland, but curiously comforting.

The Doctor finished the meal then lay back on his pillows.

When the nurse came back for the tray he was fast asleep. She looked down at his bruised sleeping face, and smoothed the long brown hair away from his forehead.

She picked up the tray and the Special Branch man closed and locked the door behind him.

‘How is he?’ he asked. ‘Any trouble?’

‘No, no trouble.’ She smiled. ‘He’s sleeping like an angel.’

‘Some angel.’ He lowered his voice. ‘One of the blokes who brought him in gave me a word of warning. Your angel half crippled two men with his hands tonight.’ He snapped his fingers twice in quick succession. ‘Like that!’

He tapped the bulge under the left-hand lapel of his jacket. ‘I’ve got orders to shoot if he so much as looks sideways at me.’ He nodded, as if to reaffirm that what he was telling her was true.

The night-nurse shuddered and went off down the corridor with her tray.

The man from Special Branch sat down on his chair and fished a crumpled *Evening News* from his pocket. The headline read ‘KOREA – NEW OFFENSIVE.’

The Special Branch man yawned. He folded the paper to the sports section on the back and began to read.

44

* * *

In Kim Philby’s office, Melville was giving his report on the evening’s events.

‘Luckily we tried the Highgate place first, sir,’ he said. ‘It’s supposed to be a Trade Mission but they use it for some of their trickier operations. We arrived just as things were turning rather nasty.’

Philby listened impassively as Melville told him of the Doctor’s release and of his sudden shocking attack on Rurik and Boris.

It was incredible, sir,’ said the still-shaken Melville. ‘So quick you could hardly see it. And the *power*. . . We got a preliminary hospital report. One of them has three broken ribs. The other has a broken jaw.’

‘Did the Doctor give you any more trouble?’ Philby asked, startled. ‘Did he try to attack Krychov?’

‘No sir, he seemed to lose interest in him. He just went quiet after that, as if nothing had happened.’ Melville smiled. ‘Krychov was

climbing the walls trying to get away from him. Krychov's applied for political asylum by the way, too scared to go back to his boss after cocking things up. What do we do?'

Philby considered. 'Have him debriefed,' he said. 'Then hand him back anyway.'

'They'll probably execute him,' Melville said. It was a statement of fact, not a sentimental observation.

'Probably,' Philby agreed. 'Where's the Doctor now?'

'At the Clinic, sir. Under sedation and under guard as well of course.'

'What sort of shape is he in?'

'Pretty good. Superficial cuts and bruises, nothing serious. As I said, we arrived before they really got to work on him.'

'Right, keep him there, I'll go and see him tomorrow. No written report on the evening's events. They never happened.'

'Suppose the Ivans kick up a fuss?'

'Not really in a position to, are they? One murder, one kidnapping. Their own Ambassador frowns on that sort of thing. To say the least.'

'What about the two heavies?'

'As soon as they're fit to travel, dump 'em on the Russian Embassy doorstep.'

'How do we explain their injuries?'

'We don't,' said Philby blandly. 'Why should we? Nothing to do with us if a couple of Embassy chauffeurs go out, get drunk and end up having a fight.'

'Right, sir.'

'Was the Doctor carrying any documents?'

'No, sir. Nothing at all.'

'And the Russians?'

Melville shook his head. 'Nothing on them either.' He paused. 'May I ask what you're planning to do with the Doctor, sir?'

'Use him, Jimmy. That's what we do with people in this business. We use them.'

When Melville had left the office, Philby sat brooding for a while. He pressed the intercom and the voice of the night operator came on the line.

'Sir?'

'Get me the Postal Authorities, will you? I need to arrange an intercept.'

Dozing a little, the Special Branch man shifted on his hard wooden chair.

He heard a sudden sharp 'click', and became instantly alert. As he jumped up, grabbing for his gun, the door opened revealing a pyjama-clad Doctor standing in the doorway.

As the Special Branch man's hand touched the butt of his Walther PPK automatic, the Doctor's hand dropped almost affectionately on to his shoulder, and long fingers clamped down on his neck. . .

A few hours later the dark-haired nurse came along the corridor carrying a breakfast tray. It was her last task before clocking off. She frowned at the sight of the empty chair by the door, and then reflected that even highly trained Special Branch men weren't immune to the call of nature.

She hesitated for a moment, then unlocked the door with her pass-key. She refused to believe that the Doctor was actually dangerous. Not to her, anyway.

Besides, the guard couldn't be far away.

She went into the room and looked down at the huddled form beneath the blankets. She put the tray down on the table and went to draw the curtains, letting in the spring sunshine.

She went back and stood by the bed. 'Wake up now,' she called brightly.

'Breakfast!'

The figure in the bed moaned and stirred slightly.

‘Come along!’ said the nurse briskly and pulled back the covers from the sleeping form. She jumped back with a gasp of surprise.

The head on the pillow wasn’t brown haired and handsome. It was square-jawed and snub-nosed with close-cropped fair hair.

It was the Special Branch man, dressed in the Doctor’s hospital pyjamas and sleeping peacefully.

‘He did what?’ snarled Philby into the phone.

‘Escaped, sir,’ said Melville apologetically. ‘Sorry to wake you up, but I thought you’d want to know right away.’

46

Philby was appalled. ‘How did he escape, for God’s sake? He was supposed to be under guard.’

‘He was, sir. Special Branch man called Parker. Reliable chap, by all accounts.’

‘Well?’

‘Some time in the night, the Doctor got up and managed to pick the lock.

There was a bit of wire snapped off from one of the bed-springs, we assume he used that. He must have opened the door, knocked out Parker and dragged him inside. Then he dressed Parker in his pyjamas. . . ’

‘And walked out of the Clinic wearing Parker’s clothes and showing Parker’s pass,’ finished Philby sourly.

‘That’s about it, sir.’

‘Is Parker hurt?’ From Philby’s tone it sounded as if he wouldn’t be too upset if the man was injured.

‘No, sir. Feeling pretty foolish though.’ Melville hesitated. ‘One odd thing sir, the Doctor isn’t armed. He left Parker his gun, tucked into his pyjamas.’

Philby frowned. ‘Maybe he just doesn’t like guns.’ He did seem to

recall something to the effect in Greene's report now Melville mentioned it. More and more he was certain that this Doctor was the same man that Greene had dealt with at the end of the war.

'Judging by his performance last night he doesn't need one,' Melville was saying. 'What next, sir?'

'Get out a description. Police, and our own people as well.'

'Yes sir. Long-haired man with a bruised face and a baggy suit. Shouldn't be too hard to find.'

'He'd better not be,' said Philby grimly. He looked at his watch. 'I have another appointment. Get busy, Jimmy, I'll see you at the office later.'

For all Melville's optimism, Philby had an idea that the Doctor would not be found until he was good and ready. He took his coat from the stand by the office door, and set off for the Sorting Office.

Less than an hour later, Philby was striding through the busy sorting office and into the manager's office. He introduced himself, and produced his credentials.

The manager was a sharp-nosed, bespectacled type with slicked-down hair.

'Oh yes, I remember your interception order,' he said proudly. 'Don't see too many of those! Envelope addressed to a Dr John Smith at an address in Bloomsbury, am I right?'

'Quite right,' said Philby.

'All taken care of,' said the manager complacently.

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'Can I have the envelope please?' said Philby in an exaggeratedly calm voice.

The manager smiled tolerantly at him. 'I can hardly do that now, can I? All taken care of, as I said.'

'What the b-bloody hell do you mean?' snarled Philby. 'You've seen the interception order and my credentials. I warn you, this is a matter of national security, and if you're going to be obstructive. . . '

‘No need for language,’ said the manager in offended tones. ‘I only meant I can’t give you the envelope because your man has already collected it.’

Philby’s mouth worked for several moments before any sound came out of it. ‘What man?’

‘The chappie you sent over to get it, of course. Very pleasant young gentleman, he was.’ He shot Philby a look that suggested he was making a contrast.

‘We had quite a nice chat,’ he added.

‘ *Who collected that envelope?* ’ Philby spluttered.

‘It was all in order,’ said the manager soothingly. ‘He showed me his credentials. A Mr Parker, it was. From Special Branch.’

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Chapter Seven

Code

When Philby reached his office, there was a call from Jimmy Melville.

‘We’ve just been turning over the Doctor’s flat, sir.’

‘Who ordered you to do that?’

‘Using my initiative, sir.’

‘Then don’t,’ snapped Philby.

‘I thought there was just a chance he might head for home when he left the Clinic,’ protested Melville.

Philby made an effort to keep his voice calm and reasonable. ‘Listen to me, Melville. This is a highly complex, top security case, and you do *nothing* without a direct order from me. Understood?’

‘Understood, sir.’ Melville sounded hurt and crestfallen.

Heaven preserve me from the young and keen, thought Philby. ‘All right,’

he went on. ‘Since you’re there have you found anything?’

‘No, sir. No document. And no sign of the Doctor either. He’s left very few traces of himself, nothing personal, nothing to say who he is or where he comes from.’ Melville paused. ‘There was one strange thing, though.’

‘Go on.’

Philby listened for a few moments then came to a decision. ‘Right,’ he said,

‘here’s what I want you to do. . . ’ He issued a stream of precise instructions and then said, ‘Got all that?’

‘Got it, sir,’ Melville said, puzzled.

‘Right. Call me when the job’s done, here or at my flat. And don’t botch it up!’

The Doctor meanwhile was sitting at a quiet table in a Lyons Corner House, drinking tea, eating toast, and preparing to try to crack a code.

As soon as he had collected the envelope he had made his way to an old clothes shop in the dockland area. He had swapped Parker’s good-quality suit for a nondescript brown checked sports jacket and grey flannel trousers and an old cloth cap – a straight swap provided he was allowed to change on the spot. The shopkeeper had been dubious at first, but the deal was very much to 49

his advantage. The Doctor had clinched things by flashing his Special Branch pass and spinning a romantic tale about undercover work chasing smugglers.

In his new outfit with his hair tucked inside the cap, the Doctor felt that if not *un* recognisable, at least he wasn’t *easily* recognisable. Proceeding on the assumption that the best place to hide was in plain sight, he had bought a notebook and pencil and taken refuge in a tea-shop, crowded with City clerks and typists.

All in all, the Doctor reckoned he wasn’t too badly off. He had changed his appearance, he had adequate cash – the contents of Parker’s pockets and wallet – and he still had Parker’s warrant card, though it would be dangerous to use it too often.

Best of all, he had a little time.

What he did next depended on his success with the code. Non-

involvement was no longer an option.

He took the envelope out of his pocket and opened it. As he'd half expected, it contained a sheet of flimsy paper, covered with a jumble of numbers and letters.

Taking a bite of his toast, the Doctor started work.

The two men, one tall and thin, the other bulky and thick-set, strolled gently through the park, pausing to admire a particularly fine bed of roses.

'So,' said the bulky man reproachfully. 'You have succeeded in losing both the document and the Doctor. The former, presumably, being now in the possession of the latter.'

'You lost him f-first,' said the tall man.

'You took him from us first,' said the bulky man.

'I had no alternative. I had to look keen for my superiors' sake. The Colonel has his eye on me all the time. Besides, that fool Krychov would have killed him.'

'Instead of which you allowed him to assault two of my men. Now *my* superiors are demanding vengeance.'

'Why send that moron Krychov and his two gorillas after him in the first place?'

'Like you, I had no alternative. I too have to appear. . . ' He waved a hand in the air as he searched his memory for the word, ' . . . keen.'

'Well, be good enough to leave the Doctor alone from now on. I don't want him harmed, not yet anyway.'

'What does it matter? As long as the document is recovered.'

'By Krychov, or some other fool like him? Or by Melville, or the Colonel?'

The document must be recovered by *you* or by *me* in person,' the tall man 50

reminded him. 'If it falls into the hands of our superiors or even our over-zealous juniors, then we're both finished.'

‘What now then?’

‘Back off. Leave the Doctor to me.’

‘And what will you do?’

‘I shall find the Doctor and do a deal with him.’

‘How? You have no leverage.’

‘Oh yes I have,’ said the tall man calmly. ‘I know a little more about the Doctor now. And besides, I have something he wants.’

‘Very well,’ said the other grudgingly. ‘But it had better be soon. And do something quickly about your indiscreet friend. He can’t stand up to much pressure – and if he goes, we go, and Tightrope goes with us.’

At the next junction of paths, the two men separated, strolling away in opposite directions.

It was not impossible for Kim Philby of MI6 and Cultural Attaché Vasili Mikoyan to have a legitimate reason for meeting. But it was a risk neither cared to run too often or for too long. . .

The Doctor finished his sixth cup of tea and sat back. His exercise book was filled with a jumble of numbers and figures and crossings-out. He had had only partial success with the code – it was a fiendishly complicated variant of one he had encountered before.

But he seemed to have a natural gift for code-breaking – a gift sharpened by recent association with Britain’s finest code-breaker, Alan Turing.

He studied the few lines in clear at the bottom of the page.

Somebody was facing inevitable discovery. ‘He must go *now, at once.*’ There was a reference to something called Tightrope, and to some shadowy group or organisation called *the Players*.

None of this meant anything at all to the Doctor. But it must mean a great deal to someone on one side or other in the Cold War. Or perhaps, thought the Doctor, to different individuals on both sides. The Doctor had a feeling that the document was a communication across the Cold War battle lines. There was a caution in the way it was phrased which, coupled with the fact that both sides knew of its existence and wanted it, gave him this feeling. And that meant that if

it fell into the wrong hands, both sender and recipient would be branded traitors.

No wonder so many people were after it.

The Doctor considered his next move. Various parties wanted the document and couldn't find it. He on the other hand *had* the document, and didn't really want it. Except as a bargaining piece.

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Perhaps he could trade the document – and his silence about its contents –

for simply being left alone. It was all he wanted. It didn't seem much to ask.

Not from his perspective, anyway.

Meanwhile he had to get back to his flat. Perhaps his pursuers would have left somebody there waiting. If so, that somebody would have to be dealt with.

The Doctor decided to wait until after dark.

He paid for his tea and toast and left the Corner House. He got a bus to Trafalgar Square and spent an enjoyable day wandering round the National Gallery and afterwards the National Portrait Gallery.

Some of the faces seemed curiously familiar. He found he could put names to them without consciously recognising them. And when he checked the labels, all too often the name the Doctor associated automatically with the face was the Christian name, or a contraction of it. When he looked into the painted face of the Venerable Bede, he could imagine the man holding a fishing rod for some reason. More flashes of non-memory. More fantasy and illusion, he decided. He pushed the thoughts to the back of his mind, and made his way back towards the exit.

He strolled up Lower Regent Street to Piccadilly Circus and sat half-dozing in a News Theatre, watching an endless round of cartoons, travelogues, 'interest' short films – 'Mining Today' was particularly soporific – and of course newsreels, Gaumont British News.

Such news as there was, wasn't encouraging. The Korean War was still dragging on, with America's General MacArthur making bellicose

noises about invading China and using the atom bomb. Senator Joseph McCarthy was still proclaiming the existence of hundreds of Communists inside the State Department and many more in the Pentagon, the universities, and even in Hollywood – where the House UnAmerican Activities Committee was running a new investigation. With the war six years over, food rationing dragged on.

One piece of good news, apparently, was that petrol rationing was to come to an end.

Like the Doctor himself, the audience seemed largely indifferent to the news, whether ostensibly good or bad. Since most of the audience consisted of young couples wrapped in each other's arms, perhaps this wasn't surprising.

When the programme had come round for the third time, the Doctor got up and went up the stairs into Piccadilly Circus. It was dark now, and he merged with the strolling crowds under the neon lights, drifting along Shaftesbury Avenue and heading towards Bloomsbury.

In his borrowed flat, Kim Philby was stretched out in a leather sofa, a large whisky in one hand and the telephone receiver in the other. He was listening

to a report from Jimmy Melville.

'Operation all complete, sir,' Melville was saying. 'Turned out to be a bit of a job but we managed it. What do we do now?'

'Pull out,' ordered Philby.

'Completely, sir?'

'Completely. Nobody on site, no watchers nearby. Any sign of the opposition?' he asked.

'Not a sniff, sir. They seem to have cleared out completely.'

'Then it's time that you did the same. The Doctor will turn up some time tonight, and I don't want him scared off. You left the note?'

'Yes, sir, just as you said.'

'Good. Make sure your cargo's secure and then go home. See you tomorrow.'

Philby put down the phone, finished his whisky and poured himself

another.

He made a mental note to go easy. It looked like being a long night, and he wanted to be ready for his visitor when he arrived.

He unlocked the briefcase by the side of his chair and took out a thin buff file. Settling back in his armchair he began to read.

The Doctor strolled apparently at random through the avenues around the back street that held his flat.

He was looking for idlers and loungers, wandering pavement artists or door-to-door-salesmen, strange news-vendors, suspiciously parked vans or twitch-ing window curtains. There was nothing. If the operatives of either side were staking the place out there was no trace of them. And there was always something, even if only a strange car number-plate or a feeling of tension in the air.

The area was clean.

The most obvious place for anyone waiting was inside the flat itself. It was very possible that the unwatched streets all around were just part of the trap.

The Doctor went round to the back of the house, swung over a back fence, climbed a drainpipe and went through the bathroom window of the flat upstairs – owned by an old lady currently visiting her niece in Scotland.

Once inside the house he made his way silently down the stairs and entered his own flat. It was empty – but it had not been empty for very long.

The Doctor switched on lights and looked around. There were small traces of a meticulous search. Moved ornaments, drawers fractionally open, furniture out of line. However an attempt had been made to put things back in place.

Must be MI5, thought the Doctor, the KGB wouldn't be nearly so polite.

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He went down the stairs to the cellar and switched on the light. He froze at what he saw. Or rather, did not see.

The cellar stood empty. The blue box was gone.

The Doctor stood quite still for a moment.

Then he saw a small piece of paper on the floor, in the exact centre of the square where the blue box had stood. He went over and picked it up.

It held two numbers and a word.

‘17 Albany.’

The Doctor studied the paper thoughtfully, then put it in his pocket.

Suddenly he became aware that he was not alone.

A man was standing at the top of the cellar steps.

He was tall and well-built – taller and wider than the Doctor by a sizeable margin. He had a long, thin face, his nose angular and his cheekbones visible through the taut skin. His hair was close-cropped, and so blonde as to seem almost white.

The man wore a black trench-coat with the collar turned up, and he was carrying a knife. Its blade was long and thin, needle sharp and double-edged.

Handle and blade were both jet black. It was the kind of knife carried by commandos on night raids during the war. A knife made to slit the throat or slip between the ribs of some unsuspecting sentry with ease.

Almost casually, he strolled down the steps towards the Doctor.

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Chapter Eight

Assassin

The Doctor backed slowly away, until his back was against the far wall of the empty cellar.

The man stopped at the bottom of the steps.

‘Awfully sorry, old chap,’ he drawled. ‘I’m afraid you’re surplus to require-ments. Mr Philby sends his apologies.’

The voice was smooth, urbane, vaguely upperclass – what people were coming to think of as BBC English.

‘MI6 employing assassins?’ asked the Doctor mildly. ‘Surely not. Most un-British. Besides, MI6 have nothing against me – well, nothing much, anyway.’

They rescued me from the Russians the other night. They might be a bit irritated with me at the moment, I left them rather suddenly – but nothing to warrant this sort of thing.’

The man with the knife seemed to consider.

‘Don’t care for that scenario, old chap? How about this?’ Suddenly he spoke in a heavy Russian accent. ‘Dr John Smith, you have been condemned to death as an Imperialist agent, guilty of serious crimes against the Soviet State. *Shmyert shpionam!*’

‘Death to spies? But I’m not a spy.’

‘The KGB may think differently.’

‘Perhaps,’ said the Doctor. ‘They do have more reason to want to kill me, I admit. Which side are you on then? Or are you drawing double pay?’

Dropping the accent, the man reverted to standard English.

‘You just don’t know, do you, Doctor? And nobody will know which side you were on either.’

‘Why should anybody care?’

‘Because your dead body is about to be discovered in circumstances of maximum publicity. You will be found with incriminating Russian documents in your pocket and a British commando dagger in your heart. The British will blame the Russians, the Russians the British, and the Cold War will get a few degrees colder.’

‘But why? What’s the point?’

‘Let’s say I find it amusing.’

‘Who are you?’ the Doctor asked levelly. ‘What are you?’

‘If you want to know who killed you – my name is Axel.’

‘Why do you want to kill me?’

‘I told you, it amuses me. Don’t worry about it, Doctor, it’s all in the game.’

He took a step forward and then paused. ‘I say, you’re not armed are you?’

Because if you are. . . ’

Suddenly there was an automatic in his left hand. Ambidextrous, noted the Doctor. Something to remember.

‘No, I’m not armed,’ he said.

Axel smiled. ‘They said you never carried weapons.’ The gun disappeared.

‘Excellent. I prefer the knife. It’s more – personal.’

He sprang forward.

To the assassin, it seemed that he crossed the cellar in one swift bound, knife held low.

Thumb on the blade and strike upwards.

The Doctor, his back, quite literally, to the wall, was surely doomed.

For the true martial arts expert, time in combat slows down.

To the Doctor, his would-be killer seemed to float across the cellar in slow motion. Almost lazily he stepped aside, and the savagely-driven thrust of the knife drove its point into the cellar wall, scraping along the whitewashed stone.

Moving quickly past his attacker, the Doctor crossed to the door and flicked the light-switch.

The assassin spun round and found himself staring into blackness. He stood panting for a moment, his knife-hand almost numb from the impact with the cellar wall. Slipping the knife away, he drew his gun.

The Doctor’s cool voice came from somewhere in the darkness.

‘Like looking for a black cat in a coal-mine, isn’t it?’

Instantly the assassin fired in the direction of the voice.

But the Doctor had moved again.

Strong fingers caught both the attacker’s wrists. His right arm was twisted behind his back, while his left hand was thrust upwards until the muzzle of the automatic was thrust up under his own chin.

He heard the Doctor’s voice close to his ear.

‘How about a mysterious suicide?’ said the Doctor conversationally. ‘It would baffle MI6, the KGB and your unknown employers as well. I think that would be *much* more amusing.’

To his horror, the attacker felt an incredibly strong hand close over his gun-hand and another finger increasing the pressure of his own upon the trigger. . .

* * *

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Suddenly the Doctor’s hands were empty.

He stood for a moment, clutching the air, and then crossed to the door and switched on the light.

In the glare of the dangling bulb, the little cellar was completely empty.

The only traces of the attacker were a knife-scraper on one wall and a bullet-mark on another.

The Doctor stood quite still for a moment.

Then he turned out the light went up out of the cellar and left the flat, locking the door carefully behind him.

He walked along the little back street, alert for watchers or followers, but saw nothing. In Tottenham Court Road he hailed a passing taxi.

‘Albany, please,’ said the Doctor, and was carried away.

At the rapping on his door, Kim Philby threw down the file he was reading and got to his feet. He went out into the hall, opened the door

and saw, without much surprise, the Doctor standing on the threshold.

‘Come in, I’ve b-been expecting you.’

The Doctor came into the little hall, and Philby closed the door behind him.

He looked at the nondescript clothes and the cloth cap and smiled.

‘Congratulations on the disguise, no wonder we couldn’t find you. Let me relieve you of that hat.’

He took the Doctor’s hat and hung it up and ushered him into a comfortable study. The Doctor looked round. Oak panelling, college crests, an oar on the wall. Leather armchairs, heavy old-fashioned furniture.

‘All a bit gentleman’s club I’m afraid,’ said Philby. ‘I’m only over here from Washington for a few days, borrowed the place from a friend who’s away.’

Have a seat. Drink?’

The Doctor shook his head. ‘No thank you.’ He sat down in one of the leather armchairs.

Philby poured himself another whisky, a small one this time, and sat down.

‘I was beginning to wonder if you were coming.’

‘I’m afraid I got held up at my flat. Someone tried to kill me, you see.’

Philby’s tone was as cool as the Doctor’s own. ‘Unsuccessfully, obviously.’

Any idea who it was?’

‘He said you sent him. Did you?’

‘Absolutely not. I don’t want you killed, Doctor, I assure you. I want to talk to you and I want your help. I hope you believe that.’ Philby smiled.

The Doctor nodded. ‘Yes, I think I do. Because the next minute he was saying he was from the KGB. Then he said he was from neither and he was just amusing himself.’

‘Did he say anything else?’

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‘Not really. He said I wasn’t to worry about it, it was all *in the game*.’

Philby leaned forward, eyes bright with interest. ‘Did he use that precise phrase?’

‘Yes, I think so.’

‘Did you – dispose of him?’

‘No, he managed to slip away.’

‘He seems to have been very lucky,’ said Philby dryly. ‘Judging by what happened to those two Russians. . . I must say that surprised me, you don’t appear to be a violent man.’

‘It surprised me too,’ said the Doctor, with feeling. ‘If I’m directly attacked, I seem to slip back into some kind of atavistic state. It’s all very puzzling.’

It occurred to Kim Philby that the Doctor spoke about himself like someone discussing a complete stranger, but he made no comment.

Instead he leaned forward and tapped the folder on the table.

‘I’ve just been reading about you, Doctor. Graham Greene’s report on the Alan Turing business. It’s a remarkable document – remarkable mostly for what it leaves out, I suspect.’

‘Nice fellow, Greene,’ said the Doctor vaguely. ‘How is he?’

‘Not too happy, I’m afraid. He’s out in West Africa, hating every minute of it.’ Philby paused. ‘Well, pleasant as it is, to discuss old times. . . I believe you have some property of mine, Doctor.’

The Doctor took Oskar’s grey envelope from his inside pocket. ‘This? I’m not too sure whose property it is.’

‘It was intended for me,’ said Philby calmly. ‘Unfortunately, it got – diverted for a time. The courier became convinced he was being followed, and passed it on to Oskar for safe keeping. Then the courier was killed – and Oskar was too paranoid to pass the document on. It seems that you were the only one he trusted.’

‘Why did the Russians kill him trying to get it back?’

‘The document is as valuable to them as it is to me. You might say it com-promises both sides.’

The Doctor was silent for a moment. Then he said, ‘I’m not sure if this envelope is yours or not – but I *am* sure you’re holding property of mine. I’ll give you this envelope when you return my property.’

Philby shook his head. ‘I’m sorry, Doctor, it just won’t do. I must have the envelope at once. I’ve got some documents here which will explain. . . ’ Philby reached into the open briefcase by the side of his chair. His hand emerged holding not papers but a large revolver, which he pointed at the Doctor. ‘The envelope, please, Doctor – now. No, don’t get up, just toss it over to me.’

The Doctor sat poised, the envelope in his hand.

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‘Don’t try it,’ said Philby gently. ‘If I must I’ll shoot you here and now and take the envelope from your body.’

Still the Doctor didn’t move.

‘Doctor, please,’ said Philby. ‘Be reasonable, don’t make me kill you.’

‘Where is my property?’ The Doctor’s voice was low, with an edge of anger to it.

‘Your precious blue box is in a secret underground warehouse, intended for the storage of national treasures in time of war. The warehouse is guarded at all times by armed troops. There’s no way you can find the box, let alone recover it, without my help.’

‘The box is – important to me,’ said the Doctor. ‘What’s the price of its return?’

‘First the envelope,’ said Philby. ‘Then your services.’

‘As an agent for MI6?’

‘As an agent for me.’

‘For how long?’

‘For the time it takes to conclude a particular operation. If you

succeed, I will deliver the box to anywhere you choose. I'll destroy your file. And I'll provide you with documentation for a new identity so you can live undisturbed by the authorities.' Philby steadied the revolver in both hands, aiming at the Doctor's head. 'Well, Doctor, what's it to be?'

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Chapter Nine

Conspiracy

The Doctor spun the envelope across the few feet between them, so that it landed neatly in Philby's lap.

'All right,' he said. 'Why not?'

'Thank you, Doctor.'

Philby lowered the revolver, uncocked it, and put it back in the briefcase.

He picked up the envelope. 'Sorry to have to resort to blackmail,' he added apologetically.

The Doctor sounded indifferent, almost bored, as though he'd suddenly lost interest in the whole affair.

'That's all right. Life's been a bit flat lately. It'll give me something to do.'

'It'll do that all right,' said Philby grimly. He took the sheets of flimsy paper from the envelope. 'Did you manage to decode this?'

'Only partially,' admitted the Doctor. 'With a little more time and help. . . '

'Like Alan Turing and all the facilities at Bletchley?' Philby laughed. 'How much did you get?'

'Not much. Some sort of "fly at once, all is known" message.'

'Anything else?'

'A couple of vague references. Something called "Tightrope", some people called "Players". Code names for groups or organisations I suppose.'

‘Mean anything to you?’

‘Not a thing.’ He sounded thoroughly bored with it all now.

‘If you’ll give me a little time to decode this, Doctor, I’ll do my best to explain. It’ll take a little time, I’m afraid. Sure you won’t have a drink?’

The Doctor shook his head and stretched out in his armchair, eyes half-closed. He looked, thought Philby, as if he were in some kind of suspended animation.

Philby took a one-time code pad out of his briefcase, went over to the roll-top desk and began to decode. Minutes ticked slowly by. From time to time he glanced over at the Doctor, motionless and silent in his chair. Philby thought that he had never seen such complete repose. There was something eerie, inhuman about it. Like a lizard on a rock, he thought.

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Twenty minutes later he sat back, took out a large white handkerchief and mopped his brow.

He put the code flimsies and the decoding papers in his pocket and poured another large whisky.

‘Bad?’ said the Doctor.

‘Even worse than I imagined,’ said Philby. He sank back in his armchair and sat nursing his drink. ‘Forgive the question, Doctor, but how much do you know about world affairs?’

‘Assume I know nothing,’ said the Doctor. ‘I’ve been. . . unwell, recently. I haven’t been taking much interest in anything.’

Philby nodded. ‘Very well, I’ll begin with the absolute basics – forgive the lecture. You must know that towards the end of the war, the Americans, with some help from the British and others, developed the atom bomb.’

The Doctor nodded. ‘Then, of course, they had to use it. They always do.’

‘Exactly,’ said Philby. ‘They used it on the Japanese, at Hiroshima. The justification for this was that it was the only way to force Japan to

surrender.'

Philby paused, and took a swig of his whisky 'Anyway, they dropped it. The bomb had the power of thirteen thousand tons of TNT. It destroyed the entire city and killed at least a hundred thousand people. Many more died later from radiation poisoning.'

'But even that wasn't enough, was it?' said the Doctor quietly.

Philby shook his head. 'Four days later they dropped a second bomb on Nagasaki. It was a plutonium explosion bomb, even more powerful.'

The Doctor's voice was remote. 'I expect they'd made a few improvements, and wanted to try them out.'

'No doubt,' said Philby. 'Well it worked. More death, more destruction
—

and the Japanese surrendered. But some of the scientists who'd worked on the bomb were unhappy about it actually being used. They thought the threat alone would have been enough.'

'Backed up, perhaps, by a simple demonstration,' said the Doctor thoughtfully 'Some uninhabited island. . . '

'These scientists were even more unhappy when the bomb was used the second time,' Philby went on. 'And there was something else. Some of them didn't think such a terrible weapon should be monopolised by one world power.'

They felt that the results of scientific research should be available worldwide.

A few of these scientists felt so strongly that they began passing atomic secrets to Russia. With this help, and with the work of their own scientists, the Russians developed their own bomb by 1949.'

'And has that made things better?'

Philby cocked his head to one side as he answered. 'In a way it has, strangely enough. Some of the more warlike of our American friends became

less keen on atom bombing Moscow when they knew the Russians could re-taliate in kind.'

‘And the Russians?’

‘Oh, some of them wanted to do it to America before America did it to them.

But Stalin knows the Americans are still ahead of him in the atomic race. So even though the Russians have the bomb, very few of them really want to use it.’

‘Stalemate,’ said the Doctor. ‘A nuclear standoff.’

‘Precisely,’ said Kim Philby. ‘ *And that’s how it’s got to stay.* Those bombs must never be used.’

‘Is there any danger of that happening?’

‘Oh yes. Only last month MacArthur was all ready to escalate the Korean War by bombing China. Luckily Truman was sensible and brave enough to fire him. But the danger’s still there. The moment some idiot thinks he can fight an atomic war *and win*. . . ’

‘Nobody wins an atomic war,’ said the Doctor in that same detached voice.

‘All you’re left with is a radioactive cinder hanging in space. I know,’ he added quietly, ‘Believe me, I know.’

Philby looked curiously at him, but didn’t comment. After a moment he said, ‘So, the world’s in an extremely dangerous situation. Has been for years, will be for years to come. We’ve got the power to destroy our planet – and there’s no guarantee we’re not stupid enough to use it.’

‘It’s always a turning point, the discovery of atomic power,’ said the Doctor.

‘After that a civilisation goes one way – or the other.’

Philby leaned forward. ‘Now Doctor – who really knows just how dangerous things are?’

‘You?’ suggested the Doctor.

‘Exactly!’ Philby tapped himself on the chest. ‘Me and people like me. The spies! Or as we prefer to be called – members of the Intelligence community.’

We know first when the paranoia's growing, when some fool thinks he can make a first-strike and get away with it.' He paused, as if coming to a decision.

'Some of us decided to do something about it. We formed "Tightrope." The aim is to hold the stalemate in place, redress the balance when it tips too far, keep the political and military idiots under control.'

'Presumably there are idiots on both sides?' suggested the Doctor.

Philby laughed, though without much humour. 'Most certainly.'

'So to deal with them, you'd need "Tightrope" agents on both sides?'

'Exactly.'

'You've been working with the Russians? Co-operating with them?'

'Where necessary, yes.' It was strange, Philby thought as he answered, but he seemed somehow able to talk to the Doctor. To confide in him. He was al-63

ready telling this stranger things which he would keep from his closest friends and allies. Already he had confessed enough to get himself hanged for high treason – and to whom? To a man he was blackmailing; a man who had every reason to distrust him and to betray him at the first opportunity.

'It sounds – complicated,' the Doctor said. There was something in his guileless voice, his experienced manner, that engendered confidence.

Philby found it difficult not to explain further. 'Believe me, it is,' he said.

'Tightrope agents are in even more danger from their own side than they are from the opposition. If they're caught collaborating with the opposition they'll be branded traitors.'

'And you've been in on this from the beginning?' The Doctor seemed curious rather than admonishing.

'I set it up,' Philby confessed.

'Wasn't it hard to persuade the Russians to trust you?' Again there was no surprise, just the logical request for clarification.

'Not really. I've been a Russian agent – a double – for twenty years.'

Incredible, Philby thought in a detached way as he spoke. He'd say almost anything

– confess to almost anything – just to try to get a reaction. Even confirmation that he had done the right thing.

The Doctor considered for a moment. 'Yes, I suppose that would make things simpler.'

Philby was almost disappointed by the Doctor's calm reaction.

'Aren't you shocked to learn that I'm not really on your side, Doctor?'

'Oh, I don't have a side,' said the Doctor simply. 'One thing does puzzle me though.'

'What?'

'Who are you really working for? Where do your loyalties lie?'

Philby considered the matter as if for the first time.

'As a member of MI6 I serve the United Kingdom. As a Russian agent, I further the cause of Soviet Communism. Most important of all, as a member of "Tightrope" I try to stop the world from blowing itself up.'

The Doctor shook his head. 'As I said – complicated.'

Kim Philby grinned. 'It's more complicated than you think, Doctor.'

'How could it be?'

'Some of my Russian employers don't really trust me. They suspect me of being a triple.'

'A what?'

'A triple. A British agent who pretends to be a double-agent and work for Russia, but is really a British agent all along.'

'And are you?'

'I'd scarcely tell you if I was, would I?'

The Doctor smiled suddenly and widely. They both knew that Philby

had confessed so much already that it would hardly make any difference. 'This other name in the document,' said the Doctor, changing the subject as if to allow Philby one final secret. 'Players. . . ' He broke off suddenly, staring blankly into space.

'What is it?'

'Just for a moment I thought the word meant something to me. But there's nothing. Who are they?'

'I wish I could tell you. All I know is that their aims are the direct opposite of those of "Tightrope".'

'They *want* to cause an atomic war?' This did appear to surprise him.

'So it seems. We've realised for sometime that some organisation is working directly against us. Where we try to keep things calm, they provoke trouble.

Where we suppress warmongers, they encourage them. Somehow they fo-ment aggression on both sides.' Philby shook his head in angry bafflement.

'Why should they want to start a war that will destroy them as well as the rest of us?'

'Perhaps they think they won't be here for the grand finale?' suggested the Doctor vaguely.

'Where could they possibly go?'

'Away from this planet?'

Philby stared at him. 'You think they have a rocket ship? Like Flash Gordon?' he asked incredulously.

The Doctor shrugged. 'Maybe they came here in one,' he suggested. He seemed serious enough.

But it was too much for Philby. 'Aliens? Little green men in flying saucers?'

You can't be serious, Doctor.' He laughed out loud and reached for the whisky.

'Can't I?' The Doctor's face fell in disappointment. 'Perhaps not,' he admitted. 'Where does the name come from?'

‘They killed one of my agents – they’ve killed quite a few as a matter of fact. They seem to be able to kill and vanish at will. We managed to get to this particular agent before he died. All he could say was “the Players. . . ”

Somehow the name stuck.’

‘The man who tried to kill me,’ said the Doctor. ‘He said something about it being “all in the game.” You commented on that. He intended to create a scandal around my death, to make the Cold War even colder.’

Philby nodded. ‘I can assure you that none of my agents tried to kill you, Doctor. And I’m pretty sure from my contacts that the Russians didn’t either.’

‘Which only leaves these Players,’ said the Doctor.

‘Which only leaves the Players,’ confirmed Philby. ‘They know about you somehow, Doctor. And now they’re coming after you.’

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Chapter Ten

Double

The Doctor considered the statement calmly. ‘You may well be right. The man who tried to kill me seemed to know something about me. Doesn’t that make me less useful to you?’

‘Why should it?’

‘Because I take it that the operation you want me to help with is the discovery of the Players?’

‘Their discovery, and their destruction,’ said Philby.

‘But if they already know me –’

‘Doctor, we can’t *find* the Players. We know nothing about them. They get into places that are utterly secure, they kill and get away when escape is impossible. They seem to be able to influence and corrupt almost any one.’

Philby paused. ‘All we have is you, Doctor. You’re our only link.’

‘I see,’ said the Doctor. ‘So it’s not my assistance you need but my services as bait. Turn me loose, see who tries to kill me, capture them before they succeed. Or after they succeed of course, that would be just as useful.’ He smiled again. ‘To you, I mean.’

‘Not at all, Doctor,’ protested Philby. The fact that you may attract the attentions of the Players, and learn something about them in the process –’

‘If I survive.’

‘If you survive, it is simply a bonus. I want your help because you are a secret agent of outstanding ability.’

‘You persist in thinking I’m some sort of spy, when I’m no such thing. Why won’t you listen?’

Philby got up and poured himself yet another large whisky. As the Doctor noticed, it seemed to have absolutely no effect on him. He looked enquiringly at the Doctor who shook his head. He stood looking down at the Doctor, drink in hand.

‘You appear from nowhere, and disappear just as suddenly. You have no real friends, no family, no official existence. You have outstanding combat skills, and a knowledge of codes, disguise, escape and evasion. If you’re not a spy, Doctor, who are you? What are you?’

For a long time there was no reply.

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At last the Doctor looked up and said, ‘I can’t tell you.’

Philby had the feeling he was telling the literal truth. A top agent who had suffered some kind of breakdown, perhaps? It was common enough. All the same, he appeared to be functioning, especially in a crisis. If the operation drove him over the edge – well, that would be too bad. He’d just have to find someone else.

Philby smiled down at him. ‘You can keep your secrets, Doctor. I won’t pry.

Help me find the Players and you can take your blue box and disappear again

– and I’ll help you to do it!’

‘All right,’ said the Doctor. ‘Where do I start?’

‘With a man called Donald Maclean. He’s a colleague of mine – and a double agent.’

‘Like you?’

Philby smiled thinly. ‘As you say, like me. But he’s nothing to do with “Tightrope”. He’s far too unstable. Now, the thing is, my colleagues in MI6

are on to him. They backtracked some old security leaks and the evidence points straight to Donald. He knows they’re closing in, and he’s cracking up already. A warrant’s been issued and he’ll be arrested on Monday. When that happens he’ll tell them everything.’

‘And incriminate you?’

‘Amongst others.’ Philby nodded towards the decoded message on the desk.

‘That document was on its way to me. They sent it here en route for Washington, warning me that Maclean was about to be arrested. When I learned it had gone astray somewhere in London, I had to make an excuse to dash over here and recover it. Well, that’s been done. But I still have to do something about Donald Maclean. Which is where you come in.’

‘How?’

‘You’re going to smuggle him out of the country.’

‘On behalf of the. Russians?’

‘On behalf of both sides, if that makes you feel any better. The Russians want to get Maclean safely in Russia before he can be arrested. The British Government won’t be too distressed if they succeed.’

‘Why not?’

‘If they have to put Donald on trial it means another embarrassing spy scandal. If he simply disappears and surfaces later in Moscow, it’ll be a lot easier to play it all down.’

‘So nobody really wants to stop him going?’

‘It’s not that simple. MI6 would like to catch him to discover how badly they’ve been penetrated. MI5 would like to catch him to make MI6 look bad.

And there are people in Five and Six who have their suspicions of me, and 68

think Donald Maclean could give them some real evidence – which he could.

Nothing’s simple in the espionage business.’

‘Not even the names,’ complained the Doctor. ‘All these numbers and letters.’

‘Sorry,’ said Philby. ‘MI5 is the British Security Service. MI6 is the Secret Intelligence Service. Both sometimes called the Secret Service. In theory, Five play at home and Six play away. In practice, they’re always stepping on each other’s toes.’

‘Aren’t you all supposed to be on the same side?’

‘Again, in theory. But Five and Six are deadly rivals. And there are factions within each individual service as well.’ Philby waved the subject aside. ‘Now, about Donald Maclean.’

‘I’m still not sure what you want me to do.’

‘Go and see Donald tomorrow evening, at his house down in Kent. Convince him of the danger he’s in. He’s to leave at once, that same night. Escort him down to the coast and across the channel. I’ll furnish you with the details later. Arrangements will be in place by then, you’ll be contacted on the other side.’

The Doctor seemed to be in an argumentative mood.

‘You make it sound like the afterlife,’ he mused. ‘Which I suppose it may well be. But why should we wait until tomorrow? Suppose they decide to serve the warrant before Monday?’

‘And ruin everybody’s weekend? Not a chance.’ He smiled again. ‘This is England, my dear Doctor.’

‘Then why me? Wouldn’t it be better if you went yourself?’

‘Not a bit of it,’ said Philby emphatically. ‘By the time Donald disappears I want to be back at my desk in Washington, innocently

going about my business. That's why we're delaying until tomorrow. I was going to use Guy to take the message, but you'll be much better.'

'Guy?'

'Guy Burgess – another double agent as it happens. He may have to go on the run too pretty soon, but Donald's the one under suspicion at the moment.'

Philby laughed. 'Old Guy's quite a character. Got a pet name for himself –

Brigadier Brilliant! He's a rip-roaring drunk and an open homosexual.'

'Doesn't sound like the ideal secret agent,' said the Doctor. 'Single or double.'

'Guy's debauched character is his biggest protection,' said Philby. 'Nobody believes the Russians would be fool enough to use him! Donald Maclean's a boozier too, by the way. Not all the time, like Guy, who's hardly ever sober.' He paused to refill his whisky glass, apparently oblivious to the irony inherent in the action. 'Donald's the perfect diplomat – most of the time. But every now 69

and then he breaks out.' Philby drained his glass and stood up. 'Come along, Doctor, let's make a move.'

'Where to?'

'We'll go out and get something to eat, shall we? You can sleep here tonight, there's a spare room and I can lend you some kit. You'd better have an early night, you've got a busy day tomorrow.'

'Doing what?'

'Visiting the department's document section. We must concoct a new identity for you.' Philby looked critically at the Doctor's nondescript clothing.

'You'd better visit the outfitters as well. And as they say in the Army, Doctor –

get your hair cut!'

Next evening, a Friday, a very different Doctor sat in a first-class carriage of the 5.49 train from Victoria to Oxted. His hair had been neatly trimmed. He wore a well-cut dark suit, highly polished black

shoes, a white shirt and a regimental tie. On the seat beside him rested a rolled umbrella and a bowler hat. Documents in his pocket showed him to be Dr John Smith of the Foreign Office Intelligence Department.

He leaned back in his corner seat, thinking about his night out with Kim Philby. They'd started in a crowded Soho restaurant that served excellent food and wine, apparently quite untroubled by shortages and rationing. Despite the crowd they'd got a good table almost at once. It was clear that Philby was well known here.

They'd moved on to an even more crowded cellar drinking club, where drink was plentiful and the concept of closing time apparently unknown. In both places the patrons had been well-dressed and prosperous, quite unlike the tired, drab figures on the streets outside. The idea of austerity didn't seem to have taken root here.

The Doctor had eaten and drunk little, and talked even less. It didn't matter.

Kim Philby had more than made up for him in all three departments.

He had told the Doctor about his father, St John Philby, a famous traveller in India and Arabia, expert on the East, and an advisor to Middle Eastern potentates. He told of his childhood in India where he had been born, at the time when his father was still in the Indian Civil Service.

'Used to play on the Courthouse steps with the Indian kids. Burnt brown by the sun, rattling off Hindi – I could have passed for a native, any time.

That's why they nicknamed me Kim, after the boy in the Kipling story.' Philby laughed. 'One bathtime my *ayah* found a cobra in the bath. She ran screaming to the old man – he didn't turn a hair. Fetched his shotgun, blew its head off, told her to clean up the mess and get on with my bath.'

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The Doctor gathered that Philby had both feared and adored his eccentric father. But he had seen little of him after being sent back to school in England.

'He'd left the Indian Civil Service by then and was always off travelling somewhere, first India then Arabia. Converted to Islam in

the end, made the pilgrimage to Mecca and started calling himself Abdulla Al Hajji!’

Kim Philby had gone to public school in England and then on to Cambridge in the thirties where his gradual conversion to Communism had taken place.

‘I realised the existing system in England was cruel, unjust and and corrupt,’

he said. ‘Mind you, nearly everybody was a communist at Cambridge in those days. With most of them it wore off in later life. They got good jobs, got married, joined the privileged classes and drifted to the right. But with a handful of us, it stuck!’

Over the years, Philby had increased his contacts with the communist underground, already busily recruiting in English Universities.

‘They told me to break off all my communist contacts, start looking right-wing, and get into the Secret Service. Took me till 1939, but I managed it eventually – and I’ve survived till now. Though for how much longer. . .

They’ll get on to me in the end.’

Philby spoke of these things quite openly, not even lowering his voice in the crowded drinking-club.

‘Aren’t you taking rather a risk, talking like this?’ asked the Doctor.

‘I suppose so. It’s surprising how strong the urge is sometimes. You spend a lifetime of cautious deceit then, suddenly. . . ’ Philby laughed. ‘Know what old Donald did recently? Donald Maclean, the one you’re whisking away tomorrow? Apparently he had one of his boozing sessions with someone in the department. At the end of the evening Donald suddenly said, ”What would you do if I told you I was a Communist agent?” Chap he was dining with was stunned, just muttered, “I don’t know.” And Donald said, “Well, I am! Go on, report me.”’

‘And did he?’

‘Of course not. He said next morning it all seemed too ridiculous for words.

Decent chap like old Donald. . . ’

‘That seems rather – unprofessional.’

Philby leaned forward. ‘Doctor, before I joined the Secret Service I was in considerable awe of it, like most people. Once I was actually inside the service myself, I soon realised it was a total shambles. I used to wonder if the organisation I’d joined was just a joke, a front to deceive the Russians, with a real Secret Service somewhere behind it. But it wasn’t. It was all there was. . . ’

In spite of an evening’s hard drinking, Philby had been bright-eyed and professional next morning. He had seen the Doctor through his various trans-formations – the process had taken most of the day – and then sent him off to 71

Victoria Station to catch the 5.49 to Oxted. There a taxi would be waiting to take him to Tatsfield, the little village where the Macleans were living.

‘Donald always catches the 5.19 – if he goes home at all that is. Sometimes he stays in London boozing. Catch the next train and you’ll arrive half an hour after him.’

‘Is there any danger he won’t go straight home tonight? If I miss him. . . ’

Philby chuckled. ‘I think even Donald will be going home tonight. It’s his birthday; he’ll want to spend it with his family.’

They parted outside Philby’s office. Philby himself was heading for the airport to catch the next plane back to Washington, where he was Head of Station.

‘Come on and join me there, Doctor, when you’ve got Donald safely on his way, and we’ll plan our next move. You’ve got all the necessary tickets and travel documents, and some American dollars as well. You don’t know how lucky you are.’

‘Don’t I?’

Philby spoke with a kind of schoolboy glee. ‘Most people find it hard to travel anywhere these days, what with visas and low currency allowances. No petty restrictions for us. See you in Washington, Doctor.’

He hailed a taxi and was whisked away. . .

The train came to a halt and a guard's voice called 'Oxted! Oxted Station!'

Pulling the leather strap to open the window, the Doctor picked up his bowler hat and umbrella and got out of the carriage. The train departed in a cloud of steam and the Doctor handed his ticket to the ticket collector and walked through the little station. Outside, the promised taxi was waiting.

Twenty minutes later, the Doctor was standing outside 'Beaconsfield', a big old house on the outskirts of the little village of Tatsfield. It was set back from the road by a shrubbery-lined drive.

He went up the path and knocked on the door.

After a few moments the door opened. A dark-haired woman stood there, looking at the Doctor in puzzlement. She was very pretty, but looked very tired. She was also, it was impossible to avoid noticing, very pregnant.

She said, 'Yes? What can I do for you?' She had a soft American accent.

The Doctor took off his hat. 'I'm here to see Mr Donald Maclean.'

She gave him a disgusted look. 'Can't you people leave him alone? He's only just got back home. And today of all days. It's his birthday!'

'I know, and I'm sorry. I'm afraid it's very urgent. I'm from Foreign Office Intelligence.'

'I guess you'd better come in.'

She stood aside to let the Doctor in, and closed the door behind him.

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Neither the Doctor nor the woman at the door saw the dark figure standing in the shrubbery at the end of the drive, watching as the door closed behind them.

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Chapter Eleven

Warning

The Doctor found himself in the gloomy hallway of a big old-fashioned house

– the kind that prosperous people built in the twenties and thirties, when there was no shortage of servants to run things. These days, servants were rarer.

Judging by the woman's air of exhaustion, in this residence they were missing altogether.

'I'm Melinda Maclean,' said the woman. She looked enquiringly at the Doctor.

'Smith. Dr John Smith.

'You're kidding!' Before the Doctor could reply she went on, 'Sorry, didn't mean to be rude. I guess there must be a lot of folks around called Smith, or there wouldn't be all the jokes about it being such a common name.'

'We are a numerous family,' said the Doctor solemnly.

When had he said that before? He had a sudden picture of an insanely elaborate office and a scrubby little man with a toothbrush moustache. Just a flash, then it was gone again.

'Especially in the registers of seaside hotels,' Melinda Maclean was saying as he returned to reality. 'Are you OK?' she asked in sudden alarm.

The Doctor smiled. 'Sorry, just a moment of abstraction.'

'You've been overworking,' said Melinda Maclean. 'Like my husband. I know the symptoms. All too well,' she added almost under her breath. She took the Doctor's umbrella and bowler hat and put them on the hall table. 'I'll tell him you're here.'

'No need.' A man was striding down the hall towards them.

The Doctor remembered Philby's words. 'Donald's the perfect diplomat.' He studied Maclean carefully. Very tall, about six feet three or four. Good-looking in a worn kind of way. Elegant, arrogant – and giving off tension in palpable waves.

He looked down at the Doctor with disfavour. 'So, who the devil are you?'

‘This is Dr Smith, from Foreign Office Intelligence, darling,’ said Melinda Maclean.’

Maclean stared suspiciously at the Doctor. ‘I don’t know you.’

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‘Newly assigned. I’m sorry to disturb you on your birthday, but the matter is urgent.’

‘Well?’

‘It is also confidential. A security matter.’

A small boy’s voice wailed from upstairs. ‘Mummy! Mummee!’

Melinda Maclean gave them a harried look. ‘I’m trying to get the kids off to sleep. I’ll leave you to have your talk.’

She hurried off upstairs and Maclean led the Doctor into an old-fashioned shabbily furnished sitting room, with French windows looking out onto a leafy garden. He closed the door behind them and turned to face the Doctor.

‘Well?’ he said again.

The Doctor said calmly, ‘A warrant has been issued for your arrest.’

‘That’s ridiculous. On what charge?’

The Doctor had no idea. ‘High Treason,’ he declared impressively. ‘They know you’re a double agent.’

‘Of all the ridiculous accusations –’

The Doctor held up his hand. ‘Please, we don’t have time for the usual protestations. I must tell you that I’m not really from Foreign Office Intelligence. If I were, you’d be under arrest by now.’

‘Then who the devil are you?’

‘A messenger from Kim Philby.’

Maclean’s eyes narrowed suspiciously at the name. ‘Kim’s in Washington.’

‘He came back for a few days. Largely to help you.’

‘And what’s the message?’

‘Fly at once, all is known!’

‘What?’

‘That’s the gist of it. Philby says they’ll serve the warrant on Monday. He says you must leave now, at once. Tonight.’

‘Leave for where?’ Maclean was looking round, nervous now, beginning to believe.

‘Passage has been booked on the cross-channel ferry to St Malo. It leaves from Southampton at midnight. It’s only about a hundred miles, we can make it easily. Once in France, I’m to hand you over to friends. I’m told arrangements have been made.’

‘What arrangements?’

‘I have no idea.’

Maclean strode to a drinks trolley and poured a large whisky.

‘I’m not happy about this. I don’t know you. If I could talk to Kim. . . ’

‘He’s on his way back to Washington,’ the Doctor told him. ‘Besides, he’s got worries of his own. I imagine a call from you is the last thing he wants right now.’

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‘I’m still not sure. . . ’

‘Well, it’s up to you. All that’s saving you for the moment is the sacred English weekend. If somebody suddenly gets worried, or keen, they could serve that warrant tomorrow – or even tonight.’

‘I’ve only your word for it that this warrant exists.’

The Doctor sighed. ‘If you don’t believe me, you can have a nice weekend in the country, turn up to work on Monday and be arrested the moment you arrive.’ He shrugged. ‘It’s all the same to me, really.’

‘I can’t just walk out, leave Melinda and the children on my birthday. You can see her condition. My sister and her husband are coming to stay tomorrow.’

‘I’m sorry,’ said the Doctor. ‘I’m only the messenger. There’s an escape-route open for you tonight, if you want to use it. But I can’t guarantee how long it will stay open if you’re not on that ferry tonight.’

Maclean stood staring at him, frozen in indecision.

They heard a knocking at the front door and Maclean swung round in alarm.

‘It’s too late, they’re here already,’ he said in a husky voice.

They heard Melinda Maclean open the door, and the sound of a brief exchange.

An exuberant, slightly slurred voice said, ‘Of course he wants to see me!

Don’t worry, my dear, I’ll show myself in.’

The door was flung open and a man stood in the doorway, swaying slightly.

He was medium-sized, plumpish, wearing a crumpled suit and a bedraggled bow-tie. His striped shirt was far from clean and he needed a shave. His dark hair was unruly and his face, which must once have been cherubically handsome, showed the marks of a life of determined debauchery. A ripe aroma of brandy and port came off him in waves, wafting ahead of him as he entered the room.

‘Donald,’ he began, I’ve come to –’ He broke off at the sight of the Doctor, and his eyes widened. He pursed his lips. ‘You are a dark horse, Donald.

Who’s your handsome friend?’ He gave the Doctor a dazzling smile. ‘I’m –’

‘Don’t tell me,’ said the Doctor. ‘I think I know. Mr Guy Burgess, I presume.’

Burgess stared at him. ‘Have we met? Surely not? I’m sure I’d remember you!’ He closed the door behind him and came into the room.

‘We haven’t exactly met,’ said the Doctor. ‘But I’ve heard a lot about you.’

‘All too true I’m sure. Who from, may I ask?’

‘Kim Philby.’

‘This is Dr Smith,’ said Donald Maclean. There was just enough emphasis on ‘Smith’ for it to be apparent that he did not believe this was the Doctor’s name at all. ‘He says Kim sent him down.’

Burgess pouted and winked at the Doctor. ‘I wish he’d sent him to me!’

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‘He says he came to warn me,’ Maclean went on.

‘Warn you? What have you been up to, Donald?’

‘He came to warn me that a warrant’s been issued for my arrest.’

Suddenly all the drunken foolishness dropped from Guy Burgess’s face.

‘Then I’d listen to the nice young man if I were you,’ he said calmly. ‘Because I came down to tell you exactly the same thing. Only I’m too late.’

‘What do you mean?’

‘They’re here already. At least, somebody is.’

‘Why do you say that?’ asked the Doctor.

‘There’s a man watching the house. I spotted him on my way in.’

‘What did he look like?’

‘Very tall. Black trenchcoat, very fair hair that’s been cut very short. Quite a narrow face. Rather dishy, actually.’

The Doctor recognised the description immediately. It was Axel, the mysterious assassin who had tried to kill him at his flat.

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Chapter Twelve

Flight

Donald Maclean turned angrily to the Doctor. ‘You brought him with

you! The place is surrounded.'

'I brought nobody,' said the Doctor calmly. 'And I don't think the house is surrounded either.'

'What makes you so confident of that?' Maclean demanded.

'Simply that if the place had been ringed with men, Mr Burgess would probably have spotted more than one.'

'So what's he doing here?' Burgess asked.

The Doctor considered for a moment. There was little point in telling what he believed to be the truth. The man had come to kill him, very probably to kill all three of them. Instead he produced a more reassuring explanation.

'He's probably just a watcher from MI5. They don't want to serve the warrant until Monday but they want to know where you are over the weekend.'

'How can I escape if I'm watched?' said Maclean angrily.

'One man?' said Guy Burgess scornfully. 'He's no problem. Leave it to Brigadier Brilliant! I'll go out there and make a pass at him while you escape.'

He grinned. 'How's that for a heroic sacrifice?'

'I wouldn't advise it,' said the Doctor.

Guy Burgess rubbed his stubbly chin. 'Well, you may be right.' He turned to Maclean. 'I've decided to come with you, Donald.'

'Why? There's no warrant out for you.'

'There soon will be. If they're on to you, I'm next. Besides, if you go and I stay I'll have some very awkward questions to answer. Our handsome friend outside saw me come in here, remember. At the very least, they'll want to know why I was visiting you just before you disappeared.'

'Suppose we both stay?'

Burgess laughed out loud. 'Then in that case they'll arrest you on Monday and me on Tuesday.'

‘But they’ve got no hard evidence against you,’ Maclean pointed out.

‘They’ll soon get some.’

‘How?’

‘You’ll give it to them,’ said Guy Burgess simply.

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‘You think I’d betray you?’ Maclean was scandalised.

‘Of course you would, Donald! Look at you, you’re in no state to hold up to interrogation. They’ll use their best people on this. Once Milmo or Skardon get their hands on you. . . ’ He shook his head, his mind made up. ‘No, if you go, I go, Donald. And unless you want to spend the next thirty years in prison, we must go tonight.’

The Doctor watched the exchange between the two men with detached interest. On one side, Maclean, tall, well-groomed, commanding. On the other, Burgess, plump dishevelled and debauched. Yet it was Maclean who was close to panic. The disreputable Guy Burgess was by far the tougher of the two, it seemed.

‘I think Mr Burgess is right,’ he said. ‘You should both go tonight.’

‘All right,’ said Maclean reluctantly. ‘What about the man outside?’

‘If there’s only one watcher it shouldn’t be too hard to elude him. We might do better to wait until after dark. What about transport?’

‘We can use my car,’ said Burgess. ‘I hired one specially to drive down.

Cream Austin A. 70, nippy little job. I’ll get you to Southampton in a couple of hours. Trust Brigadier Brilliant! I’m an excellent driver, very fast!’

‘Excellent’ came out ‘exshellent’ and ‘fast’ as ‘fasht’. The Doctor reflected that lurking assassins might not be the only danger he’d have to face that night. But before he could speculate out loud, the door opened and Melinda Maclean came in.

‘Sorry to interrupt, but dinner’s going to spoil if we don’t eat soon.’ She looked pointedly at Maclean. ‘It’s your special birthday dinner,’ she said with more than a hint of reprimand and annoyance.

The Doctor saw Donald Maclean make an effort to regain control of

himself.

He went over to Melinda and took her hands. 'Look, darling, I know it's a terrible thing to spring on you, but do you think we could possibly feed Guy and Dr Smith as well? We can't send them away hungry, can we?'

The Doctor saw Melinda Maclean wince. She must have been looking forward to dinner alone with her husband. Not to mention the problem of food supplies in a country still under rationing.

But she had spent too long as a diplomatic wife to even think of refusing.

'Sure, they'd be very welcome.' She looked away. 'We may have to spread dinner kinda thin, but if they don't mind that. . . '

'Of course we don't,' said Guy Burgess. 'Let me come and help you, Melinda, I'm a genius in the kitchen.'

He hustled her out of the room, leaving Maclean and the Doctor alone.

There was a moment of awkward silence, then Maclean said stiffly, 'I'm so sorry, I was so thrown by all this, I haven't even offered you a drink. What will you have?'

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'Nothing, thank you,' the Doctor told him. 'We have a very long night in front of us, I'd better keep a clear head.'

But Maclean either missed or ignored the hint. 'Well, I need a drink,' he said crossing the room to a large drinks cabinet standing in the corner. He poured himself another whisky. 'I'll tell her later, about going. Not everything, just some excuse. Back up whatever I say, will you?' There was no mistaking the sadness and regret in the man's voice.

The Doctor nodded.

'It's going to be hard on her,' Maclean went on. 'Alone here with the two children and another on the way.'

'Yes,' said the Doctor. 'It's going to be hard.'

'Maybe she'll be able to join me – later. I believe they're quite good about things like that.' He was staring off into space, distracted.

‘Who knows?’ the Doctor agreed sadly. ‘Perhaps she will.’

It was a strange meal, polite and formal on the surface but with powerful undercurrents beneath. Melinda Maclean sensed that something was wrong, but she was too polite to question her husband in front of his colleagues.

Dinner was indeed spread thin, but somehow they managed. There was tinned tomato soup and the birthday ham was eked out with some drab-tasting spam.

The only thing not in short supply was drink.

Donald made several trips to the cellar, returning each time with bottles of wine. Guy Burgess was a tower of strength, keeping Melinda entertained with a string of scandalous anecdotes about life in the Foreign Office. Before long, despite her earlier mood, she was laughing happily.

It was just as well Burgess was there, thought Melinda. Her husband was silent and preoccupied. The strange young man from the Foreign Office ate and drunk very little, and spoke even less. There was something sad about him, she thought. Or was he just shy?

She looked up and caught his eyes on her. He gave her a sympathetic smile.

When they’d finished the tinned pineapple and condensed milk, Melinda went off to make the coffee.

The Doctor looked out of the French windows. ‘It’s almost dark. We’d better go soon.’

Maclean nodded silently, his expression fixed.

Guy Burgess glanced at his watch. ‘Not nine o’clock, yet,’ he said thickly.

‘Never fear, Brigadier Brilliant will get you there on time!’

‘Where’s your car?’ asked the Doctor.

‘Parked in a lay-by in the lane. Just round the bend, out of sight of the house.’

‘You and Mr Maclean walk down to it and wait. I’ll meet you there,’ the Doctor told him.

Before either of them could comment, the Doctor got up, opened the French windows, and slipped out into the gathering darkness.

When Melinda Maclean reappeared with a tray of coffee things, Donald Maclean stood up. ‘No time for coffee, I’m afraid. We’ve got to go back to town for an urgent meeting. I’ll try to get back tonight, but I’ll take some night things, just in case.’

She stared at him in dismay. ‘Donald you *can’t* go out tonight. It’s your birthday.’ She dropped the tray heavily onto the table. The spoons rattled in the saucers and milk splashed out of the jug. ‘And your sister’s coming tomorrow, there’s the spare bed to put up and the central heating boiler needs stoking. You can’t leave me here alone to cope with all that.’ She looked at him, pleading.

‘I’m sorry, I’ve no choice.’ He sighed. ‘There’s a security crisis, a big one.’

Isn’t there, Guy?’

Guy Burgess poured himself a last glass of wine. ‘There’s a security crisis all right,’ he said with tipsy earnestness. ‘About as big as they come.’

Melinda looked round wildly. ‘What’s happened to Dr Smith?’

‘He’s gone on ahead. I’ll just go up and pack a few things.’

Maclean strode out of the room, and Melinda followed.

‘Donald, listen to me, please,’ she called.

Guy Burgess sat sipping his wine, listening to the angry voices upstairs. At least he didn’t have that to contend with, he thought. Just as well he wasn’t the marrying kind.

A few minutes later, Maclean came back into the room holding a bulging briefcase. ‘Little Fergus woke up,’ he said. ‘Wanted to know why Daddy was going away.’ He put down the briefcase and rubbed his eyes. Suddenly he looked old. Old and tired. ‘Melinda’s settling him,’ he said quietly. ‘I’ve said goodbye to her. Come on.’

Burgess drained his wineglass and stood up. ‘Decent Burgundy, that,

Donald. You'll miss it in Moscow.'

'Have to get used to vodka. Let's go.'

They went out of the study, along the hall and out of the house, closing the door behind them.

Melinda hurried downstairs a moment later. 'Donald?'

When there was no reply she opened the front door. She was just in time to see the tall, thin figure of her husband and the smaller, stouter form of Guy Burgess disappearing around the bend of the lane.

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'Goodbye!' she called. But they didn't seem to hear.

She went back inside the house, closing the door slowly and quietly behind her. As she turned to go through to the dining room, she noticed that the young man from the Foreign Office had left his umbrella and bowler hat behind.

Burgess and Maclean rounded the bend in the lane and saw Burgess's cream Austin A.70 parked in a lay-by beside a five-barred gate. There was no sign of the Doctor.

Maclean looked round nervously. The lane was dark and shadowy and the trees that lined it seemed to crowd in on them.

'Maybe we should just go without him,' said Maclean.

'Can't,' said Burgess. 'He knows all the travel arrangements. Remember?'

As they walked up to the car a heavily-accented voice behind them said.

'Not so fast, gentlemen.'

They turned and saw a tall man in a black trenchcoat. His hair was so fair it was almost white. He was covering them with an automatic.

He spoke again in a heavy Russian accent. 'You have been condemned to death as traitors to the Soviet State. *Shmyert shpionam!*'

'Don't be a fool,' said Burgess. 'We're not traitors to Russia, we're Russian agents, both of us. What's more, we're just about to defect.'

Your employers will be extremely angry if you get in our way.'

The gun did not waver. 'Did you really think you could deceive us with your pitiful plan?' sneered the Russian voice. 'You wish to go to Russia, yes.'

But only so you can steal our secrets and send them back to your English spymasters. Prepare to die!'

Burgess and Maclean stared at the black-clad man wide-eyed as he raised the automatic.

'Now, who is to die first?' There was anticipation as well as satisfaction in his voice as he swung the gun from Burgess to Maclean and then back again.

They saw another figure step silently from the trees and drop a hand on the man's shoulder.

'That joke wasn't funny the first time round,' said the Doctor.

His fingers tightened their grip and the black-clad man arched his back and fell, the automatic clattering to the ground.

The Doctor stooped and picked him up, carried him to the side of the road and tumbled him into the ditch.

'Let's get moving before he comes round,' he said as he dusted his hands against each other.

Maclean cowered back against the car. 'Are you mad? We can't go now.'

Guy Burgess looked at him in surprise. 'Why not?'

83

'You heard what he said – *smyert shpionam*?'

'"Death to spies"? What about it?'

'It's usually contracted to SMERSH. It's an internal security organisation, the one Russia sends after its own traitors. The Russians think we've betrayed them. They want to kill us.'

'That man isn't from SMERSH,' said the Doctor. 'Or from any other Russian organisation. He's some kind of freelance operator.'

Maclean's voice was panicky. 'How do you know that?'

'He tried to kill me the other day.' The Doctor shrugged as if that sort of thing happened to him all the time. 'He said he was from MI6 at first, then claimed to be on the other side.'

'Who is he?' asked Burgess. 'What does he want?'

'I'm not sure,' said the Doctor. 'But he's definitely not working for the Russians.'

'How can you be so sure?' demanded Maclean.

'Think about it,' the Doctor said. 'If the Russians wanted to kill you, they could just wait till you arrive in Moscow and then polish you off at their leisure and without any adverse publicity. Why bother going to the trouble and expense of sending an assassin?'

'He's right, Donald,' said Guy Burgess. 'Or at least, we've got to gamble that he's right. We can't stay here.' He bent and picked the automatic from the ground and offered it to the Doctor. 'Do you want this?'

'No.'

'I'll have it then.' said Maclean.

Burgess handed him the gun, unlocked the car door and got behind the wheel. 'Come on, Donald.' He waved urgently for Maclean and the Doctor to get into the car.

Maclean got into the front passenger seat, the Doctor got into the back. Guy Burgess started the car with a crashing of gears and they roared away into the darkness.

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Chapter Thirteen

Ambush

It was a nightmare of a journey.

Guy Burgess's driving was both fast and erratic – a bad combination after dark, especially on narrow, winding country lanes. His navigation was equally unreliable, and they took several wrong turnings. To make matters worse, they were doing their best to avoid

main roads, so narrow, winding country lanes were the order of the night.

Donald Maclean and the Doctor both offered to drive but Burgess would have none of it.

‘Don’t worry, I’ll get you there,’ he growled. ‘Brigadier Brilliant never fails!’

By eleven o’clock they were still some way from Southampton. It was then that they became aware that they were being followed. The lights of the car behind them came ever closer, smearing across the back window of the A. 70.

‘Fool wants to pass and there isn’t room,’ muttered Burgess. ‘He’ll just have to wait!’

The lights came closer still. Dazzlingly close.

‘I don’t think he wants to pass us,’ said the Doctor calmly. ‘He wants to drive us off the road.’

The car behind surged suddenly closer, and they all felt a jolt as its front bumper struck their back one. The car lurched under the impact, slewing across the narrow road and clipping a hedge.

‘Bastard!’ snarled Burgess as he managed to straighten the car out. He put his foot down and the A. 70 surged forwards into the night. But the lights behind were soon closing in on them again.

The chase went on, hedges and trees flashing past in the glare of their headlights. It was a pace that couldn’t last. Even if the car behind didn’t hit them, they were going to hit something in front. All it would take was a particularly sharp bend, or worse still an oncoming vehicle.

Maclean took the automatic from his pocket and wound down his window.

‘Weave about a bit, Guy,’ he said, his voice surprisingly calm. ‘Can’t get a good shot when he’s right behind us.’

Burgess began weaving the car to and fro, as much as the narrow road would allow. The tyres squealed and protested as he maintained speed.

Maclean turned in his seat and leaned out of the window as far as he could.

He fired at the car behind – once, twice, a third time without result. The flat crack of the automatic was almost drowned by the roar of the engines.

‘Slow down a bit,’ he shouted. ‘Let the swine get a bit closer.’

Burgess slowed down and the car behind surged forward until they were bumper to bumper again.

‘Now, go right then swerve to the left!’ shouted Maclean.

Burgess swung the car across the road, angling it so that there was a clear view of the car close behind through the passenger window. Maclean leaned out of the window and fired three times in quick succession.

Suddenly the car behind veered right off the road, slowing only slightly before crashing through a hedge.

‘Got his front tyre,’ said Maclean in a satisfied tone. He slid back into his seat and began winding-up the window.

‘Well done, Mr Maclean,’ said the Doctor. ‘Excellent shooting from a moving car at a moving target, especially at this speed.’ He leaned forward and spoke to Guy Burgess. ‘Take the main roads from now on, we’re running short of time. And please, Mr Burgess,’ he added, ‘try not to hit anything between here and Southampton.’

The cream Austin A. 70 roared up to the quayside minutes before the St Malo ferry, the Falaise, pulled up its gangplank.

Three men jumped out as soon as the car was still, and ran towards the ferry.

One was tall and thin, another short and plump. The third man was neither fat nor thin. He appeared to be able to keep pace with his two companions without actually running or seeming to hurry. They left the car doors open behind them.

In a moment, an outraged car-park attendant came running after them.

‘Hey!’ he yelled. ‘You can’t leave that car there! Over here, in the car

park.'

One of the men, the fat, scruffy one yelled, 'No time. Back on Monday.'

The three men boarded the ship.

Ten minutes later the *Falaise* sailed for St Malo.

Guy Burgess, Donald Maclean and the Doctor sat at a screwed-down table in the ship's saloon bar. All three were drinking beer. Burgess and Maclean were each on their third. The Doctor was almost halfway through his first.

Burgess was in a buoyant mood. 'Brigadier Brilliant triumphs again! I knew they'd never get us,' he said for what seemed like the fifth time.

'Damn sight more than I did,' said Maclean soberly. 'It was a toss-up which would finish us first, them – whoever they were – or your driving.' He turned 86

to the Doctor. 'And incidentally, who were *they*, Dr Smith? I mean, if they weren't Russians.'

The Doctor sipped his beer. Neither Burgess nor Maclean were members of

"Tightrope", Philby's inner group, and presumably neither of them had heard of "the Players". But he had to tell them something.

'I'm not sure,' he said. 'Your associate Mr Philby seems to think there's some kind of renegade group, determined to cause trouble for both sides.'

'Bloody anarchists,' said Maclean. 'Blow up the world so they can rule the ruins.'

'It's a theory,' said the Doctor.

Was that what the mysterious Players were after? But who would be insane enough to want to rule a world devastated by an atomic war?

Players. . .

Somewhere deep within him, a faint spark of memory flickered. . . and died. Something about a woman. A beautiful and dangerous woman. Was that it?

The Doctor came out of his reverie to find both men looking curiously at him.

‘Sorry,’ he said. ‘I was miles away.’

Miles away – or years away. . .

‘What’s your place in all this, Dr Smith?’ asked Guy Burgess. ‘What are you doing helping two traitors to escape? I know you’re not really with Foreign Office security. We’d have met you, or at least heard of you by now. I don’t think you’re with Five or Six either. And somehow I can’t see you as one of the comrades, you don’t seem the type.’

The Doctor smiled. ‘Neither do you.’

‘True enough,’ Burgess agreed. ‘Could hardly do the job if I did. But I am.’

Converted at Cambridge like Donald here, and Kim of course. We’ve stuck with the party all these years, risked prison, lived a lie, got precious little out of it. Now we’re on the run. Chances are we’ll never see England again. Or our families, or our friends. All for something we believe in.’ He looked off into space for a moment. ‘What do you believe in, Dr Smith?’ he asked at last.

‘Which side are you on?’

The Doctor gave him the same reply he’d given to Philby. ‘I haven’t got a side. I’m. . . non-political.’ He considered a moment. ‘I think I’m suspicious of causes – the kind where the noble end always justifies the evil means. Where you torture and kill people, all for their own good.’

‘Then I repeat my question,’ said Burgess. ‘Why are you here?’

‘It’s a very good question. Let’s say I’m doing a favour for a friend.’

‘Kim?’

The Doctor nodded.

‘Got something on you, has he?’ asked Burgess shrewdly.

‘You might say that.’

‘Let me warn you about our Kim,’ said Burgess, leaning towards the Doctor over the table. He was so close now that the Doctor could smell the cocktail of beer and whisky on his breath. ‘Kim’s a real charmer – it takes one to know one. But he’s also cunning, manipulative, and totally ruthless.’

‘I’ll bear it in mind,’ said the Doctor. He stood up, made suddenly uncomfortable by Burgess’s interest and the overpowering smell of drink. ‘I think I’ll take a look around on deck. Get some air.’

‘Are we safe now?’ asked Maclean, suddenly alarmed.

‘We should be,’ the Doctor assured him. ‘We were the last to board. Nobody followed us, I checked. So unless they knew about the boat in advance and planted somebody on board. . . ’ He shrugged.

‘Perhaps they did.’

It’s possible,’ said the Doctor. ‘But it’s very unlikely. They’d hardly have risked chasing us halfway across the country if they knew where we were heading anyway.’ He smiled reassuringly. ‘I’ll take a look around. I’ll check up on you in your cabin later on.’

Since it was early in the season the ship was only half-full. By discreetly flashing his security pass, and hinting at work of national importance, the Doctor had been able to buy a last minute ticket for Guy Burgess. He’d given the two friends the double cabin originally booked for himself and Maclean, and booked another cabin for himself.

Guy Burgess watched him curiously as he walked away.

‘He’s a strange one, our Dr Smith.

‘Fancy him, do you?’ asked Maclean.

‘But of course!’

Guy Burgess smiled. He was attracted to the mysterious Dr Smith, that was true enough. But then, there was nothing surprising in that. As he often said himself, he couldn’t so much as get on a train without fancying the engine-driver.

But he was an excellent judge of people and he had detected no flicker of response in the Doctor.

‘There’s nothing doing there, though,’ he went on. ‘He’s out of it, that one.

Out of everything somehow. Quite sad, really, he’s very good-looking.’ He drained his glass of beer. ‘This stuff’s a bit wishy-washy. How about something stronger?’

Maclean nodded without saying anything. He was feeling the effects of the whisky he had downed earlier in the evening, then the wine with dinner followed by the beer. But he was also suffering from the knowledge that he 88

might never see his country or his wife or his children again. Perhaps he would never even know if Melinda was carrying a boy or a girl. He finished his beer in a gulp and handed the empty glass to his friend.

Burgess went up to the bar and ordered two double whiskies.

The Doctor wandered around the ship for over an hour. He saw nothing suspicious, and finished up on a deserted section of deck, gazing at the moonlit sea.

He thought about Burgess and Maclean. Flawed idealists, but idealists all the same. As Burgess had said, they were about to sacrifice a good deal for their beliefs.

Were they heroes? Were they traitors? Or both at the same time?

And what of the enigmatic Philby? Another traitor, or a traitor in the cause of his country? Double agent or triple?

Yet he was undoubtedly prepared to take still more risks by struggling to save the world from destruction in an atomic war. He was a bit like the sea, that one – so much undoubtedly going on beneath the surface.

A bit like the Doctor too, perhaps, in that regard.

The Doctor found it was uncomfortable to think about such things. He was suddenly tired of this world of noble causes and endless deceit.

He turned away from the rail. As he did so, he became aware of a dark figure moving along the deck in his direction. There was something familiar about it, and the Doctor slipped into the shadows behind the lifeboat and waited. He reckoned that the man was far enough away not to have seen him. The Doctor had been able to make him out easily, silhouetted against the lights from the main part of the ship.

But the Doctor was a shadow against the dark mass of the sea. Probably, the man had not seen him.

As the figure came closer, the Doctor peered out cautiously from his hiding place. Sure enough, the man did not seem to know he was there, and walked right past.

The figure was close enough for the Doctor to see that it was a tall man in a black trenchcoat – a man with a long thin face and close-cropped fair hair.

Axel.

Somehow the assassin they had left behind was on board the ship. It was impossible, but he was there.

The man walked along the deck and disappeared around the corner of the saloon.

The Doctor emerged from his hiding-place and followed Axel. When he turned the corner of the saloon there was nobody to be seen.

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Chapter Fourteen

Voyage

The Doctor went back to the ship's bar and found it empty, except for the weary barman, washing glasses and preparing to close down.

'My two friends –' the Doctor began.

'What you might call dedicated drinkers, those two, sir,' said the barman with a trace of admiration in his seasoned voice. 'I think they'd have stayed here all night, but we have to close sometime. I sold them a bottle of whisky and they went back to their cabin.'

The Doctor thanked the barman and hurried out. He made his way below decks and rapped on the door of Burgess and Maclean's cabin.

Burgess's slurred voice said, 'Yes?'

'It's me, Smith.'

The door opened revealing Burgess in his shirt-sleeves, a whisky glass in his hand. He was considerably more drunk than when the Doctor

had last seen him.

‘Come in and have a drink,’ he said, cheerfully if somewhat indistinctly.

The Doctor came inside, closing the door behind him.

Maclean, also in his shirtsleeves, also with a glass in his hand, was sitting on one of the bunks looking glassy eyed. A bottle of whisky, already half-empty, stood on the cabin table.

The Doctor surveyed his two charges with ironic despair. The long evening of drink and danger was finally catching up with them.

‘Listen,’ he said urgently. ‘I’ve seen someone I don’t like the look of. I think he’s an associate of the man who attacked us.’

There was no point, he thought, in telling them it was the *same* attacker.

They’d never believe him. The Doctor scarcely believed it himself.

‘Stay in this cabin from now on,’ he went on. ‘*Don’t* go out for more drink.

The bar’s closed anyway, even if you could stagger that far. I’ll take a look round and check back on you later. Do you understand?’ He said everything as clearly and carefully as he could.

Which was a contrast to Burgess’s reply. ‘*Shertainly*, Mr Shmith,’ he said, swaying slightly. ‘Drop in any time. Liberty Hall, my dear chap. Liberty Hall!’

Maclean stared owlshly at him and didn’t speak.

91

The Doctor sighed. Weren’t there any *sober* spies?

‘Lock up after me,’ he said. ‘And don’t let anyone in here except me. Not a steward, nobody, understand?’

‘Of *courshe* I undershtand,’ said Burgess, swaying gently. ‘I work in the intelliger. . . ’ He frowned and tried again: ‘The intellergince servish.’ He frowned again, knowing he didn’t have it quite right yet. ‘I’m a bloody spy,’ he decided instead.

The Doctor shook his head in exasperation and went out. He waited until he heard Burgess lock the cabin door and then hurried away.

He repeated his circuit of the ship but found no trace of the man in the black trenchcoat. Which didn't mean anything of course. The man didn't have to be in any of the public areas. He could be hiding somewhere on deck or he could be in any of the closed cabins.

The Doctor considered. All he could do was stay with Burgess and Maclean all night. A wearing prospect to say the least. He wasn't all that bothered about sleep. Sleep, after all, was for tortoises. But he was feeling a powerful desire for solitude. This definitely wasn't the quiet life he had been seeking.

But on the other hand, there was a small part of him that relished it, that told himself that this was what he lived for – not the dusty volumes of dry information to be found in the British Museum. 'There's no substitute for experience,' he murmured to himself.

With that thought in mind, he went back to the Burgess and Maclean's cabin and rapped on the door.

'Open up, it's me again.'

There was no response.

'It's me, Smith. . . Remember?'

He rapped again.

Still no reply. Perhaps they'd passed out. He rapped a third time, and then, on impulse, tried the door.

It was unlocked. He opened the door and went inside.

Guy Burgess and Donald Maclean were in bed. Which was fine as far as it went. They were both, however, in the same bunk. And they were both naked.

'Not a pretty sight, is it, Doctor?' said an all too familiar voice.

The Doctor looked up and saw the man in the black trenchcoat standing in the bathroom doorway. He had an automatic in his hand.

'I'm surprised at you, travelling with these two perverts,' the man went on.

‘Aren’t you disgusted?’ His tone was entirely matter-of-fact despite what he said, the gun, and the situation.

‘No,’ said the Doctor just as mildly. ‘None of my business is it? As long as they don’t do it in the swamp and frighten the Drashigs.’

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‘What does that mean?’ the man snapped, as if suspecting he was being insulted.

‘I haven’t the slightest idea,’ said the Doctor thoughtfully. ‘Perhaps I should think before I speak.’

He glanced thoughtfully at the automatic in Axel’s hand.

‘I know what you’re thinking now,’ said the man mockingly. ‘This is the gun your friend used to fire at my car. How many times did he fire? Five shots or six? Well, do you feel lucky?’

‘He fired six times,’ said the Doctor calmly.

Axel raised his eyebrows. ‘The whole magazine. Are you sure?’

‘Since however, that is a seven-shot automatic, the question is academic.’

‘It’s more academic than that, Doctor. I’ve put in a new magazine. I thought you didn’t like guns?’

‘I don’t like overcooked cabbage either,’ the Doctor said. ‘But I still know what it tastes like.’ He paused. ‘I’m surprised you bother with guns, with all your powers.’

‘You’re forgetting the Rules, Doctor. When I take human form, I must use human methods. I must chase you in a car, kill you with a knife or a gun.’

‘What about escaping from my cellar? Or getting on board this boat?’

‘Sometimes one cheats a little – in the gravest emergencies.’

‘I see.’ The Doctor glanced at the unconscious Burgess and Maclean. ‘And what have you got against these two?’

‘Nothing, Doctor.’

‘What do you intend to do with them?’

‘Kill them, of course. I haven’t quite decided how. Mutual strangulation, perhaps, in pursuit of some form of erotic fulfilment. Or maybe one will have a knife and one a gun. It doesn’t really matter as long as they’re both dead.’

‘Why? What’s the point?’

‘Surely it’s obvious? Two fleeing homosexual spies found naked and dead in each other’s arms. The French press warned by an anonymous caller. The British will blame the Russians, the Russians the British. Or the Americans, it doesn’t really matter. The scandal will be immense!’

‘The Cold War will get a few degrees colder,’ said the Doctor,

remembering Kim Philby's words. 'It's all a bit petty though, isn't it? This sort of thing isn't going to trigger off an atomic war.'

'Every little helps, Doctor. Though to be honest, you're right, this is just a sideshow. One must have one's amusements. The real work is being done elsewhere – at the top.' Axel's long thin face twisted in a smile. 'Does it occur to you that I am talking very freely, Doctor?'

'I assume there's a reason for that.'

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'Of course there is. I intend to kill *you* as well. But it's nice to pause for a moment, to take time with someone who actually appreciates my art.'

'I appreciate many things,' the Doctor said darkly. 'But your so-called art is hardly one of them.'

Axel smiled thinly. 'Really? A shame.' He looked thoughtfully around the cabin. 'I don't think that in here will do, unfortunately. Another corpse would complicate my scenario. Now, I'll need time to produce a suitably *artistic* effect. Uninterrupted time. So, it's you first, Doctor. These two will keep for a while. Will you be kind enough to accompany me on deck? It's a beautiful night.' He gestured with the automatic. 'Open the door, please and step out into the corridor. Not too far. I'll kill you here or anywhere if I have to.'

The Doctor obeyed. Keeping him covered, Axel took a key from his pocket and locked the door.

'After you.'

The Doctor walked along the empty corridor, and climbed the stairs that led up to the dark and deserted deck.

'Over to the rail. Now, turn. I want to see your face at the moment you die.'

The Doctor turned and glanced casually down at the automatic in the fair man's hand. 'You really don't know very much about guns, do you?' he said, smiling. 'However many bullets are left, when you change the magazine you still have to chamber the first round.'

The fair man gave only the merest flicker of a glance at the gun in his hand, but it was enough for the Doctor. He closed the distance

between them in a flash, caught the fair man's gun hand, stepped behind him and twisted his arm high up between his shoulder blades. The gun thudded to the deck and the Doctor kicked it into the sea.

'Oldest trick in the book,' said the Doctor, and gave the arm another twist.

'But I doubt if you're much of a reader, are you. Now then, cabin key if you please!'

The fair man winced and fumbled the key from his left-hand pocket. The Doctor took it in his free left hand and dropped it into his own pocket.

Still retaining the arm-lock, he twisted the fair man round to face him.

'I'm a patient man,' said the Doctor, 'and I really do detest violence. But you're beginning to get on my nerves. I'm feeling quite. . . irritated.' He thrust his face close to Axel's. 'Go away,' he hissed angrily. 'Go away and don't ever bother me again.'

Shifting his grip, the Doctor gripped the fair man by his collar and by the knotted belt of his black trenchcoat. Lifting him high above his head, he pitched him over the rail and into the sea.

Without even waiting for the splash, he turned and headed for the stairs.

* * *

94

He opened the cabin door just as a recovering Burgess was disentangling himself from a still unconscious Maclean.

At the sight of the Doctor he grabbed a sheet and wrapped it around himself.

It made him look like an exceptionally depraved Roman emperor.

'This is not the way it looks, you know,' he said with drunken dignity.

'I'm sure it isn't,' said the Doctor gravely.

'I mean, I'm queer, I make no secret of that. But with Donald!' He looked down at his sleeping friend's long white body, shuddered, and threw a blanket over it. 'It was that man. He knocked us out, took our

clothes off and shoved us into that bunk to make things look bad.'

'That's right,' said the Doctor. 'That's exactly what happened.'

Burgess clutched his improvised toga with one hand and grabbed the Doctor's arm with the other.

'You don't understand. He was just – there. He stepped out of the bathroom and slugged us both. But he wasn't in there before, he couldn't have been!'

It was a subject the Doctor didn't really want to discuss.

'You were pretty far gone, you know,' he said gently. 'I expect he knocked and pretended to be me and you let him in.'

'Yes, that's it,' said Burgess, thickly as if now realising what had actually taken place. 'That's what must have happened.'

He sat down on his bunk and slumped over backwards. Within minutes he was snoring.

The Doctor threw a blanket over him, sat down in a chair, and prepared for a night's vigil.

Next morning, the pair seemed surprisingly little the worse for the night's adventures. They went down to the restaurant and consumed a large English breakfast of bacon and eggs, toast and coffee.

'May be our last one for some while,' said Maclean.

'Lord knows what they eat for breakfast in Moscow,' said Burgess gloomily.

'Caviar?' Maclean suggested sarcastically.

'Cold pickled herring and gherkins probably,' Burgess decided.

It struck the Doctor how very English these two communist traitors were.

'Do you think you're going to like life in Moscow?' he asked.

'Bound to aren't we?' said Burgess in the same disgruntled tone. 'Earthly bloody paradise. They've been telling us so for years.'

Following Philby's instructions, they lingered over breakfast until they

were the last passengers to leave the boat.

‘What now?’ asked Maclean.

‘Paris train presumably,’ said Burgess.

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The Doctor shook his head. ‘Philby felt that news of your departure might be out by now. In which case MI6 might be meeting the Paris train. He said there would be a taxi waiting for you. A very special taxi.’

And there it was waiting on the quayside. The Doctor went up to the rotund, lugubriously moustached driver.

‘Monsieur Gaston?’

‘Oui. Monsieur le Docteur?’

‘Oui. Voici vos passagers.’

And that was it, really.

Guy Burgess and Donald Maclean said polite

farewells and got in. The taxi drove away, on the first stage of the long journey to Moscow.

With an enormous sense of relief, the Doctor watched it disappear out of sight. Then he went to ask about the first boat back to England.

Early that afternoon he was back in London. There was nothing in the papers about the missing diplomats. Either the news wasn’t out yet, or the government was keeping it quiet.

By six o’clock that evening, the Doctor was on a plane to Washington.

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Chapter Fifteen

Washington

‘So Guy went as well,’ said Kim Philby. ‘That’s awkward. Dammed awkward.’

It wasn't what I had in mind at all.'

'It certainly wasn't what I had in mind,' said the Doctor. 'He turned up to warn Maclean just as I did, and insisted on coming along.'

Philby nodded. 'I can't say I'm really surprised.' He sighed. 'Guy always had very good instincts – and a well developed sense of self-preservation. Beneath that shambolic exterior, he's a lot tougher and brighter than he looks. I had hoped he'd hang on for a while longer, though.'

The Doctor and Kim Philby were talking in a basement room in Philby's house in Washington DC, a comfortable diplomatic residence on tree-lined Nebraska Avenue. The Doctor had made his way there by taxi as instructed, and found Philby waiting impatiently for news.

Philby had quickly introduced the Doctor to his wife Aileen. 'This is Dr Smith from the Foreign Office,' he told her. 'He'll be staying with us for a few days.' They spent a few minutes exchanging social pleasantries. Then, as soon as was polite, Philby had whisked the Doctor down to the basement for de-briefing.

The entire basement was taken up with a big, comfortable room. Much of the available floor space was occupied by an 'O' gauge electric train set, and a toy wigwam stood in one corner.

'This is the playroom normally,' Philby had explained. 'As if you can't tell.'

Hope you don't mind the clutter.'

The Doctor shook his head. 'No, no,' he said. 'I like trains. I used to have a set myself,' he added wistfully. 'At least I think I did. Quite sophisticated as I recall.'

But Philby wasn't listening. 'This is where Guy stayed before he got sent home in disgrace,' he was saying, lost in his memories of happier times. He pulled himself back to the present and cleared his throat. 'But now there's a vacancy, you may as well have the use of it.'

They settled themselves into battered but functional armchairs, and Philby listened eagerly to the Doctor's account of the escape.

'But you managed to get them away?' he asked anxiously as the

Doctor started his story, implying that the episode had not been uneventful.

‘Not without difficulty,’ said the Doctor. He told Philby of the various attacks, outside the house, on the road and finally on the boat.

Philby roared with laughter as the Doctor told of the final struggle.

‘Chucked him in the sea, did you? Well done.’ He slapped his knee with delight. ‘We won’t have any more trouble from him, then!’

‘I shouldn’t bank on it,’ said the Doctor. ‘We’re dealing with people with very unusual powers. If indeed they are people,’ he added significantly.

Philby stared at him. ‘Aliens?’ he asked eventually. ‘You don’t really think it’s little green men behind this, do you Doctor?’

‘Not little green men,’ the Doctor agreed. ‘Well, not as such. But beings who can assume human form. Who can appear and vanish at will.’

‘Are you serious, Doctor?’

‘The man who tried to kill me in my cellar faded away when he was in my grip. When he attacked us in the car we left him behind us on the road in a wrecked car, yet somehow he was on the boat with us. According to Brigadier Brilliant, he appeared in the bathroom of a locked cabin. . . ’

‘You don’t know the man who tried to run you off the road was the one you incapacitated outside the house,’ Philby pointed out. ‘If he had a fast car he could have recovered and perhaps reached the boat ahead of you. As for the cabin, well by your own account Guy and Donald were so drunk they could have let him in and forgotten about it.’ He paused. ‘As for the business in the cellar, he must have slipped out of your grip so quickly it *felt* as if he’d vanished.’

‘Perhaps.’ But the Doctor’s tone implied that he was far from convinced.

Philby shook his head. ‘Aliens. . . I remember in the war we got some weird reports passed on from American Intelligence. Fighter pilots in the Pacific said glowing balls of light hovered beside their planes, passed right through them without doing any damage then disappeared.’ He gave a short laugh. ‘The Yanks thought they were

some kind of Japanese secret weapon. Called them *foo-fighters* for some reason. When the war was over, they found Japanese intelligence files saying exactly the same thing was happening to their pilots, and they thought it was an American secret weapon.'

Light-beings from Altair III, thought the Doctor. Quite harmless, just curious. He didn't say it out loud, though. It sounded ridiculous.

'Whoever – whatever – these people are,' Philby went on, 'it's more urgent than ever that we get on to them. My time may be running out. Did you ever wonder why I was so keen to get Donald Maclean away, Doctor?'

'Because he was a friend?'

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'Partly. But it wasn't all altruism. Maclean is a link to Burgess – and Burgess is a link to me. While he was here, Burgess was a kind of buffer. That's why I had him to stay here. That's why I tried so hard to keep him out of trouble.

Now he's gone as well, they may start looking my way.'

'They?'

'MI5, Special Branch, even some of my own people in Six. At the moment I've got a lot of clout. I'm Head of Station here, responsible for liaison with the Central Intelligence Agency. I can get you finance, travel documents, CIA cooperation. But I can't help you at all if I have to go on the run.'

'Maybe I could just go home?' suggested the Doctor hopefully. 'I never wanted to be a spy, you know, and I got your friends away for you as you asked. Just give me a letter authorising me to collect my blue box, and a plane ticket home and you can forget all about me.'

Philby shook his head. 'Sorry, Doctor, that wasn't our deal. I still need your help to settle these bloody Players. What we've got to do now is plan our next move.'

The Doctor remembered how Guy Burgess had described Philby – cunning, manipulative and totally ruthless. A succinct but accurate assessment, he decided.

'All right,' he said resignedly. 'Their man on the boat said something

interesting, before we. . . parted company. He said that the sort of thing he was doing was just a sideshow, an amusement. He said the real work was being done at the top.'

Philby rubbed his chin thoughtfully. 'Well, in this town, the top means only one place. The White House. . . '

The man behind the huge desk in the Oval Office looked out of place in his big leather chair.

He was on the small side for a start, five foot eight inches to be exact, and he was getting a little plump. He was bespectacled and bright-eyed. He wore a white shirt, a blue polka-dot tie and a slightly crumpled double-breasted blue suit.

He seemed overwhelmed by his magnificent surroundings.

He looked like a bank clerk who would never make manager, a small-town businessman or storekeeper, a farmer, come to town for the day in his best suit. At best he might have been a minor politician in some little southern town.

In fact, he had been all of those things and more in his time.

He was Harry S. Truman, President of the United States.

Truman had been a small-time politician, a state senator, and an unexpected choice for Roosevelt's Vice-President.

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He had become President on Roosevelt's death in 1945 and attended the Potsdam Conference, joining with Churchill and Stalin to settle the destiny of post-war Europe.

Seen as a caretaker President at best, he had won the Presidency in his own right in 1948, defeating Thomas Dewey, an opponent widely regarded as unbeatable.

He had ordered the dropping of the atomic bomb and authorised the development of the hydrogen bomb. He had worked to set up the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation and the Marshall Plan, which gave massive aid to war-devastated Europe.

Most recently he had sent American troops into Korea, and subsequently fired General MacArthur, America's most famous soldier,

for challenging his authority.

He was, according to friends and enemies alike, one tough little sonovabitch.

He seemed amiable enough at the moment however, listening with polite interest to his visitor.

The visitor sat in a guest chair drawn close to the President's desk. He was a small man with longish black hair, compelling black eyes and a sallow complexion. There was something foreign about his appearance, and his accent.

He was showing the President a thick file, bulging with charts and tables.

'You see, sir – here. . . and here? A thirty per cent improvement in Rhine Test results. Of course, we're nowhere near operational yet. But one day we could be one of the most effective weapons in America's armoury.'

'That's impressive, Professor Myrek,' said Harry Truman. 'Mighty impressive.'

'I very much hope you will come and visit us soon, Mr President. A visit would make a huge difference to the morale of both test subjects and staff.'

'Well, I'd like to, son, I surely would. But there's quite a few calls on my time at present, what with this Korean mess and all. I had to bully my own secretary to fit you in today.' Truman stood up. 'Well, I'm afraid that'll have to be it for now. You just keep up the good work and I'll come and see you again when I can.'

Myrek rose as well. 'Come soon, Mr President,' he urged. He lowered his voice. 'We are beginning to get some amazing results in several areas of our work. Too soon yet to put in a report, but the potential. . . ,

Myrek bowed himself out, and Harry Truman sat down again.

For a moment he sat staring vaguely into space.

His eyes focussed on the portrait of George Washington on the curved wall opposite his desk. They dropped to the huge world globe that stood under-neath it and he suddenly thought of Chinese troops

flooding into Korea.

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A surge of anger ran through him, flooding his body and his brain with its fire.

He looked up as his favourite aide, Kent Howard, came into the office.

Howard was a Captain in the US Navy, posted to the White House as naval aide. Six feet tall, broad shouldered, with curly fair hair, Howard was movie star handsome. His good looks were almost a handicap, making it difficult for people to take him seriously.

Harry Truman however, never one to be impressed by appearances, had soon realised that the young naval officer was bright, clear-headed and extremely capable. What's more, he wasn't afraid to speak his mind.

Kent Howard had one more thing in his favour. Like Harry Truman, he came from Missouri.

Howard came forward clutching a sheaf of flimsies. 'Latest reports on Chinese troop movements in Korea, Mr President.'

Truman took the flimsies and read through them rapidly. He looked up and scowled. 'Commie bastards.'

'It's not good, is it, sir? They seem prepared to pour in almost unlimited troops.'

Angrily, Truman slammed the papers down on his desk.

'Sometimes I think we should just bomb those bastards back into the stone age. Couple of A-bombs on Peking would soon put a crimp in their goddam troop movements.'

This was so unlike Truman that Howard was shocked into protest.

'Hold on, Mr President.'

Truman glared up at him. 'What?'

'Didn't you just fire General MacArthur for talking like that?'

Harry Truman threw himself back in his chair. 'You wanna know why I fired MacArthur, Kent? Not just because he was a dumb sonovabitch

– I mean he *was* a dumb sonovabitch, but that’s not illegal for a General. I fired him because he challenged the authority of this office. If MacArthur wants to bomb the Chinese when I don’t – that’s mutiny. But if I decide I want to bomb the bastards, that’s different, because I’m the goddam Commander-in-Chief!’

Kent Howard drew a deep breath. ‘With respect. Mr President –’

‘Well?’ snapped Truman.

‘Bombing China was a dumb idea when General MacArthur suggested it, sir. . . .’

‘And?’

Howard came to attention. ‘And it’s *still* a dumb idea, Mr President.’

For a moment, Truman glared at him in speechless rage. Then he burst out laughing.

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‘Goddammit, boy, you’re right. Job must be getting to me. Now get out of here. Tell General Marshal I need to see him right away about these troop movements.’

‘Sir!’ said Howard and marched smartly from the room.

Back in his own office, Howard took a white handkerchief from his sleeve and mopped his brow. He considered for a moment, then picked up an internal phone.

‘General Marshal, please. It’s Captain Howard for the President.’

He waited for the General to come on the line, a look of deep concern on his handsome face.

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Chapter Sixteen

Files

The Doctor sat in a battered armchair in the basement playroom, two small piles of files at his side. He was wearing casual clothes, slacks, a windcheater, a checked shirt, all borrowed from Philby. Fortunately they were much the same size.

He was reading through the files methodically, one by one. He was looking for a pattern.

The files were Philby's secret records of events he believed to be connected to the *Players* phenomenon. It was a bizarre list of occurrences.

A US Senator on a goodwill visit to the British zone of Berlin had been shot down and seriously wounded. The attack had many strange features.

The Senator, a well-known and popular Democrat, had a reputation for being pro rather than anti-Russian. He wanted Russia and America to resume their wartime alliance, to co-operate in solving Europe's problems.

The attacker, an officer of the KGB, was in the American Zone on official business. He had carried out the attack in public at a meeting of the Anglo/Soviet friendship Society, wearing KGB uniform and using his service revolver.

When the British sentry outside the hall came running in, alarmed by the shot, the KGB officer had opened fire. He missed the sentry, who promptly shot him dead.

According to the report, British and Russian officials had co-operated in hushing the business up. The British were in no doubt that the Russians were as appalled as they were, and that the attack had no official sanction.

The KGB had later sent a formal apology, claiming that the officer, recently posted to Berlin from Washington, had suffered a breakdown due to overwork.

The resulting scandal might well have been much worse. The fact that the attacker was already dead, and that the Senator eventually recovered, made it easier to play the whole thing down.

In Moscow, a US Marine on duty outside the American Embassy had yelled,

'Commie bastard!' at a visiting Russian official, and had then physically attacked him, half-strangling him before being pulled off by horrified fellow 103

guards. This time the Americans had apologised. The marine in

question had a spotless record and had previously been on duty at the White House. He was now in a psychiatric hospital, and could give no reason for his attack, other than that, like all God-fearing Americans he hated communists.

In Washington, a certain Senator Joseph McCarthy had said publicly that the marine should be released and given a medal.

In Paris, a Russian diplomat, recently transferred from the Russian Embassy in Washington had punched an American diplomat on the nose at a Peace Conference, and had been hastily shipped home to Moscow.

A Washington businessman, in London on a trade mission, had stabbed a Russian fellow-guest with a steak knife at a City banquet.

In the American Zone of Berlin, the Lieutenant in charge of a platoon of American troops stationed on the border of the Russian zone had ordered his men to open fire on their Russian counterparts. His men had refused. The officer had then drawn his revolver and begun blazing away single-handed, screaming 'The bastards are coming, we've got to hold them back!' It took several of his own men to restrain him and remove the gun.

He too was now in the psychiatric ward of a military hospital. He was still insisting that the Russian hordes had been about to invade Berlin, and that he was only doing his patriotic duty in fighting them off.

Like the Marine, the lieutenant had an exemplary record, and had served for a time as military attaché at the White House.

Here in Washington, a senior diplomat had deliberately tried to run down his Russian counterpart in one of the White House car parks.

There were many more such incidents, some petty, some potentially more serious. The last file concerned an American soldier, recently posted to Berlin from Washington. He had tried to strangle his German girlfriend on the grounds that she was a Russian spy trying to get vital information from him.

A note on the file added that the girl wasn't employed by any intelligence agency and that the soldier, who worked in the cook-house, didn't have any secrets to be stolen.

The Doctor closed the file, put it neatly on top of the pile and sat back, eyes closed.

Some time later he heard a nervous cough and saw a small boy standing in front of him.

‘How do you do?’ said the Doctor politely.

‘How do you do, sir?’ said the small boy.

They looked at each other for a moment.

‘I’m John, sir,’ said the small boy helpfully.

‘What a remarkable coincidence,’ said the Doctor solemnly. ‘So am I!’

The small boy thought this was very funny.

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‘Mummy said I wasn’t to disturb you,’ said John. ‘But I peeped in and you didn’t look very busy so. . .’

The Doctor followed the direction of the small boy’s eyes.

‘Ah!’ he said. ‘Would that be your train set?’

‘Yes, sir.’

‘And would you be thinking of playing with it by any chance?’

The small boy’s face lit up. ‘If it wouldn’t disturb you terribly, sir.’

‘Not at all, I like train sets. Please go ahead.’

John ran to a corner cupboard and emerged with a large cardboard box and put it down beside the track. He began taking out various items of rolling stock and setting them up on the rails.

‘I’m afraid there’s a problem,’ he said. ‘My best loco isn’t working.’ He looked hopefully up at the Doctor. ‘Are you any good with electrical things, sir? Dad was going to mend it, he said, but he’s been too busy.’

‘I’m not really sure. I’ll have a go if you like.’ He grinned suddenly. ‘I suppose that puts me *in loco parentis*.’

John frowned, unsure whether he was supposed to laugh.

He passed

up a battered locomotive, and the Doctor began patting his pockets

absent-mindedly.

‘I seem to remember carrying some sort of screwdriver thingy with me but I must have mislaid it somewhere.’

‘It’s all right, sir, there’s a repair kit in the cupboard.’

He ran to the cupboard and returned with a cigar box of odds and ends, which he passed to the Doctor.

‘There you are, sir.’

‘You don’t have to keep on calling me sir, you know.’

‘What should I call you then?’

‘Well, you could call me John, but that might get a bit confusing. Why don’t you just call me “Doctor”?’

‘Are you a doctor then, sir, sorry, Doctor? What of?’

‘Practically everything,’ said the Doctor expansively. ‘If only I could remember my training. Right then, you get the rest of the train put together and I’ll see what I can do with the engine.’

He took a screwdriver from the cigar box and set to work.

‘Uncle Guy used to repair my train set for me,’ said John. ‘But it usually broke down again. He was very good, though. He used to spend ages playing with the train set. And he gave me that wigwam.’

‘That was kind of him.’

‘I liked Uncle Guy,’ sighed John. ‘Mummy didn’t like him much, though. I think it was because he was always leaving empty bottles all over the place.’

He lowered his voice. ‘He *drank* you see.’

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The Doctor nodded. ‘So I understand.’

‘He was sick on mummy’s best carpet once. She was furious.’

‘I suppose she would be.’

‘Then he got into trouble with the police for drinking and driving. He got stopped three times in one day for speeding.’ There was a sense of awe in the boy’s voice, as if this was a major achievement. And perhaps Guy Burgess had told him that it was. ‘The police said he’d been doing eighty miles an hour.

Uncle Guy was furious.’

‘Was he? Why?’

‘He said he’d been doing at least a hundred! They couldn’t send him to prison because of diplomatic immunity. So they sent him home instead.’

‘Yes, I know. I met him, as a matter of fact.’

‘Did you? How was he?’

‘Much the same as usual, I imagine.’ The Doctor smiled. ‘In rude health, shall we say?’

‘Did you like him?’

The Doctor considered. ‘Yes, I did as a matter of fact. He could be a bit of a handful, though. We went on a boat trip together.’

‘Was it fun?’

‘Tremendous fun,’ said the Doctor. He looked down and discovered that while they’d been talking, his fingers seemed to have repaired the engine. ‘I think this might work now. How’s the train-assembly coming along?’

When Kim Philby came into the room, whisky glass in hand, John and the Doctor were kneeling in the middle of the tracks watching an assembly of carriages and goods wagons roll smoothly around an elaborate arrangement of rails. The Doctor was operating the signals, and John the points.

For a moment they didn’t see him and he stood watching them curiously.

The Doctor, like John, seemed totally absorbed. Philby realised he’d never seen him look happy before.

John saw his father and ran over to give him a hug.

‘The Doctor’s repaired my locomotive. And look, he’s worked out a much better track layout. And he got the signals working properly!’

Philby ruffled his hair. ‘I thought you were told not to disturb him.’

‘I didn’t, honestly. When I looked in he’d finished work and was having a little zizz.’

‘I see. Well, you clear off upstairs and get ready for your supper. And switch off that damn train before you go. It’s very distracting!’

The Doctor looked on regretfully as John switched off the power and the train glided to a halt.

‘You can play with it again later on,’ said Philby. ‘Off you go!’

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John ran off upstairs, and Philby sank into a chair. He looked quizzically at the Doctor.

‘Had a hard day, then?’

‘I’ve read all the files,’ said the Doctor defensively. ‘When your son came down I was contemplating the contents.’

‘What did you make of them?’

‘They were. . . curious,’ said the Doctor. ‘Random acts of pointless aggression, carried out by people who’d never done anything like that before. And, as you say, calculated to cause trouble between East and West. Not that they seem to have managed to cause any real harm, yet.’

‘We’ve been lucky,’ said Philby grimly. ‘If they keep this up they’re bound to stir up real trouble sooner or later.’

The Doctor shook his head. ‘I’m not so sure. None of the tricks in those files really worked, did they? East and West invariably combined to hush things up or play them down. For all the huffing and puffing, nobody really wants the cold war to turn into a hot one.’

‘Are you telling me I should stop worrying?’ Philby asked.

‘Not at all. I’m pretty sure these silly tricks are part of something much more sinister.’

‘But what?’ demanded Philby irritably. ‘If the dirty tricks don’t work and are never going to work, why bother playing them? What’s the motive?’

‘Amusement, perhaps. It’s almost as if they were scoring points in some kind of game.’ The Doctor frowned. ‘They call themselves Players, remember.

I wonder if that could be it. A kind of global chess-game with living pieces. . . ’

He stared abstractedly into space.

‘That’s absurd, Doctor,’ snapped Philby.

‘Is it?’ said the Doctor vaguely. ‘I’m not so sure. Besides, there may very well be another reason.’

‘Such as?’

‘Practice. Rehearsal.’

‘What for?’

The Doctor tapped the pile of files beside his chair. ‘One thing’s perfectly clear from all this. Whoever’s responsible has the power to manipulate people’s minds.’

‘Come now, Doctor –’

‘Think about it. None of these people would have done what they did without some outside influence. Somebody made them. It wouldn’t be that hard.

It’s just a matter of playing on existing fear and paranoia. I imagine that young marine really had been taught to hate and fear communists. But he wouldn’t try to throttle one with a legitimate reason to visit the embassy. Not unless someone gave his mind a push, turned his fears up a few notches. And 107

that Army Lieutenant was trained to believe that one day the Red Army might steamroller over Berlin. Same technique with him.’

‘But why bother?’ persisted Philby. ‘If this nonsense can’t do any real damage. . . ’

‘It can’t do any real damage at *this* level.’ Again the Doctor tapped the

files. 'But suppose the technique is being developed and refined to use at a level where it can do serious harm? Suppose they use their mind-push on somebody with real power and influence? Somebody – what's that charming expression they use these days? Somebody with his finger on the button.'

Philby said, 'You mean the President.'

'Yes,' said the Doctor. 'I think perhaps I do.'

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Chapter Seventeen

Secret Service

Kim Philby finished his whisky, looked round for some more, and realised the bottle was still upstairs.

'This is all pretty fantastic, Doctor,' he said irritably.

'We're dealing with a pretty fantastic set of circumstances.'

'Any other conclusions?'

'Just one. Pretty well everyone in these files had recently spent time in Washington.'

Philby looked at his glass, realised it was still empty, and put it down.

'That's scarcely surprising.'

'Perhaps not. All the same, it suggests something, doesn't it?'

'Does it? What?'

'Whatever was done to them, to their minds, Americans *and* Russians, was done here, in or near Washington.'

Philby shrugged. 'Maybe. It's all pretty thin, isn't it?'

Suddenly the Doctor was on his feet, looming over the astonished Philby.

'If you think I'm wasting your time, why don't you let me go home?' he shouted. 'I never asked to be involved in the squalid political affairs of your petty little planet. Let's end this now, shall we?'

The force of his anger, the sheer strength of his personality, seemed to slam Kim Philby back into his chair. It was, he thought later, like opening an inconspicuous door and finding a raging furnace on the other side.

Philby wasn't easily intimidated, but it took him a moment to recover his self-possession.

He held up a placating hand.

'I'm sorry, Doctor, I didn't mean to sound disparaging. I know you've worked hard on this. You've come up with some very interesting ideas, and I promise I'll consider them carefully.'

He looked up at the Doctor and saw, somewhat to his relief, that the Doctor's face wore its usual calm, almost blank, expression. The furnace door had closed.

He stood up. 'As for our petty little planet, don't forget that if it blows itself up, you're stuck here on Earth with the rest of us!'

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'Yes, I am, aren't I?' said the Doctor, and Philby saw an infinite sadness in his eyes.

'Come up and have a pre-dinner drink,' he said. 'We've got company for dinner, someone I want you to meet.'

'Yes, of course,' said the Doctor with his usual vague politeness. 'Who, exactly?'

'A man called Anderson, James Anderson. He's with the Secret Service.'

'Like you.'

Philby shook his head. 'Not like me at all. In America the Secret Service is a corps of bodyguards. They specialise in protecting the President. Their equivalent of our Intelligence service is the CIA.'

'CIA?'

'They grew up out of the old wartime OSS. . . ' Philby saw the baffled expression on the Doctor's face and laughed. 'Sorry, more alphabet soup. You see, the Americans haven't actually had an Intelligence Service for very long.'

‘I see.’

Warming to his subject, Philby continued his lecture.

‘When America finally got into the war in ’42, they still hadn’t got a proper Intelligence Service in place. They had the FBI, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, but they were more concerned with crime. So Roosevelt set up the OSS – the Office of Strategic Services – under a man called Bill Donovan. Got our chaps in to train them, actually. In Canada, would you believe. Anyway, that was disbanded after the war, and became the nucleus of the CIA – the Central Intelligence Agency.’ Philby saw the Doctor’s expression of polite interest and smiled. ‘Sorry, I’m lecturing. Anyway, you’re in the business, you must know all this already.’

‘I keep telling you,’ the Doctor said with some exasperation, ‘I’m not in the business. The trouble is, you won’t believe me.’

‘Anything you say, Doctor. These days the CIA’s really starting to flex its muscles.’ There was a tinge of bitterness in Philby’s voice. ‘You know the Yanks, if there’s a problem they throw the almighty dollar at it. The CIA’s got all the men, all the money, all the equipment and resources in the world.

Luckily for us, they’ve still got a bit of an inferiority complex. I think they still feel a bit, well, young. Inexperienced. CIA, FBI, even their own Secret Service, they still look up to us. It’s amazing how that old myth of the fabulous British Secret Service hangs on. It’s very useful, gives me a lot of clout here in Washington.’

The Doctor looked thoughtfully at him. ‘I sometimes get the impression that you don’t really like Americans.’

Kim Philby paused a moment before replying.

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‘I was born and brought up in the old British Raj, in a time when Britain ruled most of the world, and always would. But we crippled ourselves fighting Hitler, we’ve lost most of the Empire and we’ll soon lose the rest. We’re a sideshow now, a back number. We just don’t realise it yet.’

‘So you transferred your allegiance to Russia? Changed from a declining power to a growing one, so as to be sure to be on the winning side?’

'It was that or c-crawl to the Yanks like the rest of them –' Philby broke off.

'The real point is, I made an intellectual commitment to communism twenty years ago,' he said angrily.

'Anything you say, Mr Philby,' said the Doctor.

Philby looked suspiciously at him. 'And I have lots of American friends, as it happens. Some of my colleagues in MI5 and MI6 look down on the Americans.

I don't, I cultivate them. People in my service, MI6, scorn MI5 and the Special Branch. I don't, I build bridges. Friends are very useful for a spy, and I have friends everywhere.'

'Friends you're prepared to betray for the sake of your cause?'

'If necessary, yes, for the greater good.' Suddenly Philby felt himself becoming angry under the Doctor's calm scrutiny. 'And who are your f-friends, Doctor? What are your c-causes?'

The Doctor was silent for a moment. 'I keep telling you. I have no politics –

and your politics are no affair of mine. Shall we concentrate on dealing with the problem of the Players? As you point out, we do have a mutual interest in not being blown to bits by atomic bombs.'

Philby drew a deep breath. 'Let's go and have that drink, shall we? And let's call a truce. I'm sorry, I've been under a lot of strain. I've got a terrible feeling that things are closing in on me. . . '

'How do you mean?'

Philby considered for a moment. 'By and large, what I just told you is still true – most people in Intelligence here still think our British Secret Service is like our British policemen.' He put on a fake American accent. "'Just *too* wonderful!" But recently I've been getting the feeling that just one or two people are starting to look sideways at me.' He laughed. 'May just be paranoia, of course. It's an occupational hazard for a spy. Mind you, as soon as the news about Guy and Donald gets out, the proverbial is really going to hit the fan.

We haven't told our American friends about it yet. But they'll find out before too long.'

Dinner with the Philbys was very different from dinner with the Macleans.

Washington suffered none of London's rationing and shortages. There were huge steaks, piles of fresh vegetables, puddings with ice cream and fresh 111

cream. The only similarity was the drink, which flowed freely throughout the meal.

Their guest, Jim Anderson, was a tall, raw-boned young man with crew-cut brown hair. When he leaned forward to talk, the Doctor saw the butt of an automatic in a shoulder-holster under his lightweight brown suit.

Throughout the meal, Aileen Philby, a pleasant, rather harried blonde woman kept up a flow of diplomatic chatter. At the end of the meal, she disappeared to see to the children's bed time.

'Four children take quite a bit of settling,' she said. 'As soon as you get three of them in bed, the fourth pops up again. It was kind of you to spend so much time playing with John and his train set, Dr Smith. He was thrilled.'

'I enjoyed it,' said the Doctor. 'There's no point in being grown up if you can't be childish occasionally.'

Mrs Philby went upstairs and the three men moved to the comfortable sitting room, where Philby produced whisky.

Before very long he'd drunk enough to make him talkative, and he kept up a stream of anecdotes. The Doctor sat nursing his drink and listening quietly.

Jim Anderson's attitude bore out Philby's boasts about the high esteem in which the British Secret Service, and therefore Philby himself, was still held in Washington. He listened with flattering deference to Philby's stories about his time as Head of Station in Istanbul.

'It all sounds mighty exciting,' said Anderson enviously. 'I'm afraid I haven't made it out of the States, yet. I hope to go with the President some day, but Mr Truman's not as keen on foreign travel as some of our other Presidents. He's a home town boy. Me, I'd just love to see somewhere exotic like Istanbul.'

‘Istanbul was pretty quiet actually,’ said Philby. ‘I was working out of the Consulate General’s office in the Beyoglu district. Bloody great stone building sealed off inside a wall compound. The worst danger I faced was an endless round of diplomatic parties – with exactly the same bunch of boring people at every one.’ He laughed. ‘Things used to liven up when Guy Burgess came out to see us. You remember Guy Burgess, Jim?’

‘I reckon it will be a long time before this town forgets Mr Burgess,’ said Anderson solemnly. ‘He turned up at some kind of liaison meeting completely gassed – and fell down the White House steps!’ He turned to the Doctor. ‘Do you know Guy Burgess, Dr Smith?’

‘We’ve met briefly,’ said the Doctor. ‘A very stimulating character.’

‘We had a house in the Beyerbeyl district, overlooking the Bosphorus,’ said Philby. ‘Guy used to come back drunk, stagger up to our balcony, take off all his clothes and drive straight into the Bosphorus. He’d swim back, stagger back up to the balcony and do it again – and again and again until he was sober. Then he’d get dressed and start drinking once more.’

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‘Didn’t I pick up some kind of rumour about him?’ asked Anderson. ‘Somebody said something about him disappearing.’

‘He seems to have dropped out of sight for a while,’ said Philby casually.

‘We’re looking into it. He was sent home in disgrace, remember, after that speeding business, so he’s probably sulking. Knowing Guy, he’s probably off on a three-day drunk.’

‘And some other guy’s missing as well, right? Mac-something. . .’

‘Donald Maclean, old friend of Guy’s,’ said Philby calmly. ‘I imagine Guy talked him into going off for a few days boozing in Paris. They’ll turn up soon enough, looking hangdog with monumental hangovers.’ He poured a fresh round of drinks. ‘So, how are things at the White House?’

‘Oh, fine, fine,’ said Anderson vaguely ‘Though there was one thing. . . It’s all pretty vague – so vague I don’t like to go to my boss with it. I wanted to ask your advice – if you don’t mind talking shop for a moment.’

‘What else do we ever talk about in this business?’ said Philby. ‘Ask away, Jim. If I can be of any help. . .’

‘Well,’ said Anderson. He broke off, looking at the Doctor.

‘Oh, I can vouch for the Doctor,’ said Philby. ‘His security clearance is even higher than mine.’ He smiled at the Doctor, who raised his eyebrows but said nothing.

‘That’s good enough for me. OK then.’ He paused, gathering his thoughts.

‘There’s a guy at the White House called Kent Howard. Naval guy, one of Truman’s aides. Fixes meetings, organises his diary, that kind of thing. Spends a lot of time with the President one way or another.’

Philby nodded. ‘Go on.’

‘Kent’s by way of being a friend of mine. We eat lunch together occasionally, have a drink after work. Last night, Kent told me he’s worried about the President.’

‘Worried in what way?’ asked the Doctor.

Anderson looked uneasy. ‘It’s hard to say. According to Kent his manner’s different, his attitudes. Not all of the time, but sometimes. It comes and goes.’

‘Could just be overwork,’ suggested Philby. ‘That’s got to be the toughest job in the world.’

‘Sure, but Harry Truman’s one tough little sonavabitch,’ said Anderson. ‘He took over when Roosevelt died – and nobody rated him as anything but a caretaker. Took us through to the end of the war, won an election everyone said he’d lose. None of that fazed him any. Now, he’s different.’

‘Is he having sudden bursts of aggression by any chance?’ asked the Doctor.

‘Something like that.’ Anderson regarded the Doctor with a look of admiration. ‘Kent says he took him some routine stuff about Chinese troop move-113

ments in Korea. The President suddenly blew up and started ranting about bombing China. Hell, he just fired General MacArthur for

talking like that.'

The Doctor glanced quickly at Philby, then turned back to Anderson.

'Any other symptoms?'

'Kent says he has spells of being moody, suspicious, secretive.'

'Sounds just like your average politician,' said Philby, drily.

'That's just the point,' protested Anderson. 'Harry Truman isn't your average politician. He's different. Special.'

The Doctor thought for a moment. 'I find all this intensely interesting, Mr Anderson,' he said. 'What's more it ties in with something I'm already working on.'

'What kind of something?'

'Quite a few people have been showing signs of abnormal attitudes and behaviour recently,' said the Doctor. 'Soldiers, diplomats, politicians. . . But nobody nearly as important as your President Truman.' He looked at Kim Philby. 'You remember what our friend on the boat said? "The real work's being done at the top."

Philby refilled his glass. 'You don't really think –'

'As you said yourself,' the Doctor reminded him. 'In Washington, the White House is as top as it gets!'

'But how? The President of the United States is just about the best-protected man in the world.'

'And just about the most powerful,' the Doctor reminded him. 'He'd be worth going to some extra trouble for, wouldn't he? And he's got at least one thing in common with some of the other names in your files. He's here in Washington. In his case, for most of the time.'

The Doctor turned to Anderson, who had been listening to this conversation with some bafflement. 'Could I possibly meet this naval attaché friend of yours and talk to him?'

'I guess so. When?'

'As soon as possible. Tonight? Tomorrow? It really is terribly important.'

The Doctor, thought Philby, had suddenly come alive. The force of his personality was sweeping Anderson along before him.

‘Tonight’s out,’ said Anderson. ‘Kent’s at some White House Reception with the President.’

‘Tomorrow morning, then?’

‘I guess so. Are you coming too, Kim?’

Kim Philby shook his head. ‘Tied up in meetings all day.’

‘Just you and me then, Doctor. I’ll fix up the necessary passes and pick you up here after breakfast.’

‘That’s extremely kind of you.’

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‘Let’s see if I’ve got this straight,’ said Anderson as Philby poured him another drink. ‘Important people all over have started acting strangely, right?’

And you think the same thing might be happening to the President? Some kind of brainwashing, hypnotism, something like that?’

‘It’s just a possibility,’ said the Doctor. ‘But it’s not one we can afford to ignore, is it?’

‘It sure as hell isn’t,’ said Anderson. ‘According to Kent, the problem’s getting worse.’

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Chapter Eighteen

Project Kali

Back in his respectable suit, the Doctor sat back in his seat as the official limousine drove smoothly along Pennsylvania Avenue.

‘You travel in style, Mr Anderson,’ he observed.

Anderson grinned. ‘My normal transportation is a beat-up ’47 Dodge. This set-up is in honour of our distinguished British visitor. We rate the British very highly in this town, Dr Smith.’

‘I just hope they deserve it, Mr Anderson.’

‘Kim Philby’s a great guy isn’t he?’ Anderson paused a little awkwardly.

‘Have you known him long?’

‘Not really. It’s a fairly recent working relationship, just on this one project.’

‘Don’t get me wrong, Kim’s tops with me. . . ’ Again, Anderson paused.

‘But not necessarily with everyone?’

‘It’s just that he didn’t do himself any favours over Guy Burgess. OK, so Guy’s a riot. He’s also a drunk and a queer, both very much up front and in public, and some people think he was a major security risk. Now Guy Burgess has vanished and there are some ugly rumours floating about. And with Guy and Kim being so tight, and Guy actually living in his house – well, it doesn’t look good.’

‘Have you talked to him about this?’

‘I tried, but he won’t take it seriously. Kim says he was just trying to help an old friend to stay out of trouble and I believe him, absolutely. But it might be a good idea if he watched his step, at least till this Burgess thing is cleared up.’

‘I’ll pass on the warning,’ promised the Doctor.

‘Thanks. I’ve got an idea he’ll maybe listen to you.’

They swept through the White House gates.

After a great deal of stamping and shouting by Marine sentries and much checking of passes and credentials, the Doctor found himself following Anderson along a series of marble corridors.

They turned off down a smaller, less ornate corridor and Anderson rapped on the door at the end.

It was opened by an astonishingly handsome young man wearing a gleam-ing white uniform decorated with a good deal of gold braid and a colourful row of medals. A sash completed the outfit.

‘Holy Cow!’ said Anderson in simple admiration. ‘You look like you’re straight out of the chorus of the *Desert Song*.’

The young man smiled. ‘Don’t I know it,’ he said. ‘Presidential reception and lunch for the Chiefs of Staff, full dress-uniform mandatory. Come in, Jim.’

He showed them into a large, impressively furnished office with a view of the White House gardens, and smiled enquiringly at the Doctor.

‘Doctor, allow me to introduce Captain Kent Howard,’ said Anderson. ‘Kent, this is Dr Smith of British Intelligence. I can’t tell you too much about him, but he’s very high-powered and hush-hush.’

‘How do you do,’ said the Doctor. ‘I’m afraid Mr Anderson exaggerates my importance, I’m just a simple consultant.’

‘These Secret Service guys are all the same,’ said Kent Howard. ‘Always have to be impressively mysterious! Have a seat, Dr Smith, I’ll send for some coffee.’

They all sat down and Howard spoke into his intercom. ‘We’ll have that coffee now, Dolores.’

A female voice purred, ‘Right away, Captain Howard.’

‘The Doctor’s working on a special project with Kim Philby,’ Anderson went on. ‘He thinks his project may have some connection with your recent concerns.’

They stopped talking while a stunning blonde secretary shimmered into the room with a silver coffee tray and poured them coffee, gazing adoringly at Kent Howard all the while.

‘The White House girls all fight to work for Kent,’ said Anderson when she’d gone. ‘It must be the uniform.’

‘Ignore this jackass, Dr Smith,’ said Howard. ‘Tell me about your project –

if you’re allowed to.’

The Doctor gave him a brief summary of the cases on Philby’s files – at least, of those concerning Americans.

Howard listened with polite interest, and an expression of mild

puzzlement.

When the Doctor had finished he said, 'Fascinating stuff, Dr Smith. Presumably all these guys cracked up under the strain of their various jobs. But forgive me, I can't really see what this bunch of wackos has got to do with me

– or the President.'

'That's just the point,' said the Doctor. 'I don't think these people really did crack up, not in the accepted sense. I don't think they're what you call

"wackos" either. At least, not originally, though some of them are certainly disturbed now.'

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'But surely. . . I mean these crazy things they did.'

'I think they were influenced, worked upon by some outside force. Something which made them do things they might have thought of in their wilder moments but would never otherwise have carried out.'

'Sounds kinda far-fetched to me,' said Howard. 'But even so. . . '

'Bear with me, Mr Howard,' said the Doctor. 'Imagine for a moment that I'm right. Suppose somebody does want to cause trouble by influencing people's minds. *Wouldn't they want to influence the mind of the most powerful man in the world?* '

Howard stared at him in total astonishment. 'That's crazy, Doctor.'

'Is it? Why?'

'Maybe somebody did manage to get at these other guys, I don't know. But the President is the best protected man in the world. Ask Jim Anderson, here.

Hundreds of dedicated, highly-trained Secret Service guys, all ready to take a bullet for him.'

'I'm not talking about bullets, Captain Howard,' said the Doctor quietly.

'And consider this. Here in America, your President must be one of the most *accessible* top people in the world. How many people does he

meet every day?

Meet, talk to, shake hands with. . . ’

‘He’s got a point,’ said Anderson. ‘Take this reception and lunch today.’

‘Come on now,’ said Howard scornfully. ‘You’re not going to tell me the Chiefs of Staff. . . ’

‘It’s not just the Chiefs of Staff though is it? Their aides, their entourage, the hangers-on. Assistants, secretaries, waiters. . . ’

‘All security vetted and checked out – by your own people, Jim,’ Howard pointed out.

‘Sure, and we do a good job. But this place is an ants’ nest, you know that, with half the population of Washington swarming all over it every day. I’d be lying if I said there was no chance of a ringer somewhere.’

Howard was looking increasingly more disturbed. ‘Look, what are we talking about here? Some kind of mind ray, like on Flash Gordon? Hypnotism?

Drugs?’

‘Drugs,’ said the Doctor. ‘There’s an interesting idea, I hadn’t thought of that. Something to boost the adrenaline and testosterone levels might do the trick. . . ’ He broke off. ‘Forgive me, gentlemen, I was just thinking aloud.

And I don’t really think it’s drugs anyway, it’s likely to be something far more subtle.’

‘Like what?’ demanded Howard.

The Doctor paused for a moment before replying. ‘I think we’re getting ahead of ourselves,’ he said finally. ‘Let’s not worry about *how*, or even *who* at the moment. Let’s turn to *what*.’ He looked at his listeners’ baffled faces 119

and smiled. ‘What I mean is this. . . Captain Howard, something worried you about the President’s behaviour. Worried you enough to talk to Mr Anderson, even off the record. Tell me please, exactly *what* worried you?’

Howard considered. 'In confidence, and off the record?'

The Doctor nodded.

'OK. I don't know how much you know about the President, Doctor. But you can take it from me, he's –'

"A tough little sonovabitch"?'

'Exactly, Doctor. A tough little sonovabitch. Right. Now, I've been with the President since this Korean thing blew up. Believe me, he hates it. He hated sending troops in in the first place. But he felt it had to be done – and when Harry Truman thinks something has to be done, he goes right ahead and does it. I also happen to know, he wants out. Oh, he doesn't want to *lose*, that would be bad for American prestige. But he doesn't really think he can win.

He wants a truce. His whole policy is to end the war by peaceful means.'

'And a very rational policy it is too,' said the Doctor. 'Please, go on.'

'Just recently, he's had spells of swinging right away from that policy.'

'Is there any sort of pattern to these fits of aggression?'

Howard considered. 'I guess they start on a kind of high, then they gradually fade. He'll have a spell being absolutely normal. Then he'll break out again.'

'As if the influence had been renewed,' mused the Doctor. 'The aggression re-charged. When did he last "break out", as you call it?'

'Yesterday morning. I guess. He started raving about bombing the Chinese back into the stone age. Now that's gotta mean using the A-bomb – and he hates the idea of using the A-bomb as well.'

'He used it twice before.'

The Doctor was simply recalling the potted history given him by Kim Philby, but his remark produced an angry reaction from Kent Howard.

'Do you know the set-up towards the end of the war, Dr Smith? I do. I was there, in the Pacific. There were hundreds, thousands of islands between us and Japan. Most of those islands were occupied by fanatical Japanese soldiers, every one of them more than happy to die rather than surrender.

We'd have had to winkle them out, island by island, soldier by soldier. We'd have lost countless men and the war might have dragged on for another five years. The President's advisors told him only a direct order from the Emperor would make those soldiers surrender, and that dropping the bomb was the only way to make him stand up to the generals running his government and give that order.'

There was a moment of silence.

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Then the Doctor said, 'It's an argument, though I'm not sure it's one that justifies Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Don't let's argue about the past, Captain Howard. Let's concentrate on our present problem. What had the President been doing just before his most recent outburst?'

Howard calmed down a little and thought for a moment. 'He'd been seeing Professor Myrek, the man in charge of *Project Kali*.'

The Doctor nodded. 'What's that?'

Howard looked uneasily at Jim Anderson. 'I'm not sure if I can tell you that.'

'Philby tells me the Doctor has top security clearance in the British Secret Service,' said Anderson. 'I'll take full responsibility.'

'All right,' said Anderson after a moment. 'The thing is, it's kind of embarrassing.'

'Why?' asked the Doctor.

'*Kali* is kind of spooky. It's what they call a *Psywar* project.'

'Let me guess,' said the Doctor. 'Psychic research harnessed to military use?'

Jim Anderson said, 'I never heard of anything like that.'

'You wouldn't. It's the CIA's baby. They're kinda shy about it.'

'I can see why. How did a nutty idea like that ever get started;

'It goes right back to the war. The Nazis were trying to use psychic powers to locate our submarines. They set up something called the Pendulum Institute in Berlin, tried to locate subs by swinging pendulums over sea-charts stretched over copper plates.'

‘Did they ever get anywhere?’

‘I don’t think so – but some genius on our side heard about it and decided we mustn’t risk being left behind. They set up a small research unit here in Washington. It trundled along for a few years, not doing any better than the Germans with their pendulums. I guess everyone forgot about it.’

Jim Anderson shook his head unbelievably. ‘Government!’

The Doctor said, ‘Do go on, Captain Howard. I take it this obscure little research unit evolved into your *Project Kali*?’

‘That’s right.’

‘How did the President get involved?’

‘Soon after he got elected in ’47 he started a review of defence spending.

About a year ago he worked his way down to the Psywar project. Only it wasn’t little any more. CIA had taken it over, bumped up the budget and hired this guy Myrek.’ Howard laughed. ‘The President blew his top. Got onto the CIA, told them to stop wasting the taxpayers’ dollar and shut the place down. The CIA pleaded with him to change his mind. They asked him to come down and take a look at the place.’

‘Did he go?’ asked Anderson.

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‘Sure. You know our Missouri motto – “Show me!” Well, he went – and they showed him. He came back a convert. Place has been a special interest of his ever since.’

‘Well, well, well,’ said the Doctor. ‘Captain Howard, can we try a little experiment? Can you remember the President’s previous bout of aggression –

the one before yesterday’s?’

Howard reflected. ‘You know that Senator McCarthy, the one who thinks there are reds under everybody’s bed and all over the State Department? The President can’t stand him, says he’s a fascist bully. About a month ago he suddenly starts saying maybe McCarthy’s got the right idea, we should round up all these commie bastards and

shoot them.'

'Did the phase last long?'

Howard shook his head. Just two or three days. After that Joe McCarthy was back to being a fascist bully again.'

The Doctor said, 'I assume you keep a diary of the President's engagements, Captain Howard?'

'Sure.'

'Could I trouble you to look at the entries for around a month ago? Check if there's anything concerning *Project Kali*.'

Howard went to his desk, took out a diary and leafed through it. He looked up, his face grave. 'The President went out to visit *Project Kali* almost exactly one month ago.'

'And returned backing Senator McCarthy. Then yesterday he gets a visit from this Professor Myrek – and all of a sudden, he wants to bomb China.'

The Doctor spread his hands. 'Gentlemen, I rest my case!'

Howard and Anderson stared at him – and then at each other.

'There's no proof,' said Howard slowly.

'That comes next,' said the Doctor. 'I must visit this *Project Kali*. Where is it, exactly?'

'About an hour's drive from Washington,' said Howard. 'But as for visiting it, Doctor, forget it. It's a top-secret security installation, they don't run tours.'

'Can't you get me permission? A pass, a permit, whatever I need?'

Not a hope,' said Howard. 'It's a CIA set-up, nothing to do with me. I'm just a White House aide.'

The Doctor turned to Anderson. 'How about you?'

Anderson shook his head. 'I'm Secret Service. Like Jim says, this thing's strictly CIA.'

The Doctor jumped up and marched up and down in frustration.

‘*Somebody* must be able to get me in there. Do you think Mr Philby could help?’

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Before anyone could answer him the door burst open and a small, angry, bespectacled man strode in. He was wearing a frock coat and striped trousers and looked thoroughly uncomfortable.

‘Kent, if I have to spend one more hour in this goddam monkey suit –’

He broke off, seeing there were others in the room. ‘Sorry, am I interrupting something?’

The Doctor became aware of a flurry of movement. He saw that Howard and Anderson were on their feet, standing rigidly to attention.

The newcomer was Harry S. Truman, President of the United States of America.

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Chapter Nineteen

Visitor

It was Kent Howard who recovered first.

‘Not at all sir, just a friendly chat. You know Jim Anderson. May I introduce Dr John Smith of British Intelligence? He’s over here for a while, working with their Mr Philby.’

‘Sure, I know Kim, great guy, came to dinner here the other day.’ Truman strode up to the Doctor, gripped his hand and shook it hard. ‘Nice to meet you, Dr Smith, always a pleasure to see one of our British friends.’

The Doctor shook hands and bowed. ‘It’s a great honour, sir. We were just talking about your *Project Kali*.’

Truman frowned and glanced enquiringly at Howard.

‘It’s OK, sir,’ said Howard quickly. ‘Dr Smith is a top level consultant to the British Secret Service. Jim here checked his security clearance with Mr Philby.’

Truman nodded. ‘I guess that’s OK then. I hope I can trust your

discretion, Dr Smith. We don't want too much about *Project Kali* getting around.' He chuckled. 'Some folks might think it's kinda foolish.'

The Doctor seized his opportunity. 'May I make a confession, Mr President?'

Truman eyed him warily. 'Go right ahead, son.'

'It's because of *Project Kali*, and some people's attitude to it, that I'm here.

Here in America and here in the White House.'

'I don't think I follow you, Dr Smith.'

'As Captain Howard told you, I'm a consultant to British Intelligence.' The Doctor paused impressively. 'My speciality is the paranormal. Psychic research.'

Still wary, Truman said, 'Go on.'

'I've been trying for some time to set up some kind of *psywars* project in England. I'm convinced it could make a real contribution to national defence.'

The Doctor sighed. 'You can imagine the kind of responses I've been getting, sir. Scorn and scepticism just about sums it up.'

'I believe you,' said Truman emphatically. 'I don't mind telling you I was pretty damn sceptical myself when I heard about *Project Kali*. I was all set to close it down, wasn't I, Kent?'

Kent Howard nodded. 'That's right, sir. But you changed your mind.'

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'I sure as hell did!' Truman's eyes sparkled enthusiastically. 'I went down there and said, "I'm from Missouri, show me!" and, by gosh, they showed me.

They made a believer out of me. I can tell you that.'

'Precisely my point,' said the Doctor. 'I heard on the Intelligence grapevine you'd been getting some amazing results. What I want to do is to use those results to make believers of some of our people back in England.'

‘How do you mean?’

‘If I could visit your *Project Kali*, see what they’re doing, it would help enormously when I go back to England.’

Truman looked doubtful. ‘I don’t know about that, son.’

‘I don’t want to know any secrets,’ said the Doctor quickly. ‘Just the general picture. If I can go back to England and say I’ve actually seen the project, and that it had your personal backing, quite a lot of people are going to think again.’

Truman looked at him with a sort of humorous scepticism. ‘You make a pretty good pitch, son. You’d make a fine politician.’ He turned to Kent Howard. ‘What do you think?’

Howard looked at the Doctor. He was a strange character, he thought, and at the moment he was being pretty devious. But there was something awfully convincing about him. And if there was anything wrong with *Project Kali*, if it was affecting the President’s moods in some way. . .

Howard decided to trust his instincts. ‘I don’t see any harm in it, sir. And if this *psywars* business has the potential you believe it has, the more people working in the field the better. I’m sure the British would be willing to share their research results.’

Truman looked at Anderson. ‘Jim?’

‘It seems like a pretty good idea to me, Mr President. As I understand, it’s our policy to co-operate with the British on Intelligence matters.’

‘OK,’ said Truman. ‘Kent, fix up a trip for Dr Smith will you? Now, why did I come in here?’

‘I think you wanted to complain about your monkey suit, sir,’ said Kent Howard solemnly.

‘Goddam right I did!’ Truman looked down at himself in disgust. ‘Look at me!’

‘Just look at me, sir. Jim here says I ought to be singing chorus in the *Desert Song*.’

‘It’s all right for you, you’ve got the face and figure for it,’ said Truman gloomily. ‘I look like the Maitre D’ in some crummy clip

joint.'

'You look fine, sir,' said Howard. 'I think you're getting off light. After all, you're the Commander-in-Chief. By rights you ought to be in an Admiral's uniform.'

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Truman shuddered. Then he said, 'I just want to go over the schedule for this afternoon with you, Kent. And there are one or two points in my speech.'

Howard caught an appealing glance from the Doctor.

'If you'll give me five minutes to fix up the Doctor's trip for him sir, I'll bring the schedule and the speech draft along to the Oval office.'

'Fine.' Harry Truman turned to the Doctor and shook hands again.

'Have a nice visit, Dr Smith. If you get time, come back and let me know how you got on. Kent here will fix it up.'

'It will be an honour, sir. Many thanks for your most generous help.'

Truman gave a general nod of farewell and departed as suddenly as he arrived.

Howard sank down into the chair behind his desk. 'Well, you did it, Doctor.'

'I did?'

'There are five magic words that sweep aside all obstacles in this town. "By Order of the President." I am now in a position to say those words on your behalf.'

'You sure made a hit with our Harry,' said Anderson.

'I like him,' said the Doctor. 'A no-nonsense politician – almost a contradiction in terms!'

It struck Anderson that the Doctor spoke not like someone who has just met a great man, but like someone assessing an equal.

'When do you want to visit *Project Kali*?' asked Howard.

'Now!' said the Doctor. He saw Howard's surprised expression and

added,

‘Sorry to rush you, but my time in America may be limited. Would this afternoon be possible do you think? How far away is it?’

‘Just over an hour’s drive.’ Howard picked up the telephone. ‘Professor Myrek, *Project Kali*, please. On behalf of the President.’

The Doctor turned to Jim Anderson. Will you come with me, Mr Anderson?’

‘Can’t be done, I’m afraid. I’m tied up all afternoon. Tell you what I’ll do though, I’ll let you have the car. I can easily get a taxi back to the office.’

‘Thank you,’ said the Doctor. ‘That will be very useful. And not just for the convenience of getting there – arrival in an official limousine will add to my consequence.’

They became aware that Howard was speaking on the phone, and that his raised voice held an edge of anger.

‘I don’t think you fully understand me, Professor Myrek. I am not discussing what may or may not be convenient to you. I am passing on the orders of the President of the United States.’ A pause. ‘Thank you. One moment.’ He looked up. ‘Four o’clock OK?’

The Doctor looked at Anderson who nodded.

‘Four o’clock,’ said the Doctor.

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‘Four o’clock will be convenient,’ said Anderson. ‘I hope the visit will be a satisfactory one, Professor Myrek. Perhaps I should tell you that Dr Smith will be reporting back to the President. Thank you.’ He put down the telephone.

‘That should make them roll the red carpet out for you, Dr Smith.’ He gathered some papers from the desk. ‘I’ve got to rush. See you soon, Jim, good luck with *Project Kali*, Dr Smith. Let me know how it comes out.’

He hustled them out of his office and disappeared down the corridor at a run.

Anderson turned to the Doctor. ‘Come down to Documentation with

me, and I'll fix you up with a pass identifying you as a White House emissary.

Then we can have a coke and a hamburger in the canteen before you set off.'

'Thank you, Mr Anderson,' said the Doctor. 'That will be very nice.' As they walked off down the corridor he asked, 'Who picked the name *Project Kali*?'

'Myrek, I guess,' said Jim Anderson. 'It seems to date from the time he took over. Why?'

'It seems an odd choice,' said the Doctor. 'Kali is the Hindu goddess of death and destruction.'

In his office in the central building of the *Project Kali* compound, Professor Myrek stood gazing out of the window. There was little enough to see. The project site was a small, isolated hollow in the rolling countryside outside Washington. In the centre of the hollow was a sort of mini-castle, once de-cayed but now showing signs of restoration. Myrek appreciated the fact that it was built like a fortress. He enjoyed the security that provided, and he relished the feudal implications – king of the castle, lord of all he surveyed.

The main stone-built building held the staff quarters and offices and some of the laboratories. The overgrown gardens around the 'house' were dotted with Quonset huts of various sizes, and the entire hollow was surrounded by a high barbed-wire fence in which was set a guarded gate.

The Quonset huts were prefabricated structures of the type used to set up barracks during the war. Some of them were dormitories for the volunteers, others sleeping quarters for the guards and yet more were laboratories.

Once the home of an eccentric munitions millionaire with delusions of baronial grandeur, the mock-castle had been lavishly restored with CIA funds.

There were carpets, there was air-conditioning; there was communication equipment, radio and television. There was a recreation room, an indoor swimming pool and a gym.

The place was comfortable, even luxurious in its way. And yet, thought Myrek, it still looked like a prison camp. Not that he cared. He was

the chief warder.

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He turned from the window as a dark-haired, stern-looking woman in a white coat came into the room. She handed him a sheaf of papers.

‘Here are yesterday’s results, Professor.’

‘Thank you, Helga.’ Myrek took the papers and leafed through them. ‘They seem satisfactory,’ he decided.

‘I think so. However, a number of the volunteers in the special category are showing signs of stress. We may be pushing them too hard.’

‘Nonsense,’ Myrek snapped. ‘Push them harder. We need more effective results. Too many of the incidents are being hushed up.’ He handed her back the papers. ‘We need more and more, a flood. We must overwhelm them.’

‘So far we have already had two suicides and one heart attack. If we increase the pressure there will be more deaths.’

‘Then,’ Myrek told her shortly, ‘we shall find more volunteers.’

‘Suitable volunteers are not easy to find.’

‘Tell the CIA to step up recruiting.’

‘Also, deaths must be explained,’ persisted Helga.

‘How many times must I tell you, Helga? There are no deaths, only departures. Some of our volunteers find the strain of the work too great and ask to leave. We pay them a generous bonus and send them on their way.’

‘After which, they are never heard of again.’

Myrek shrugged. ‘They are on holiday, spending their bonus. Perhaps they have gone abroad. Perhaps some misfortune has occurred after they left us. It is not our concern.’

‘It is not the most convincing of scenarios,’ said Helga obstinately. ‘If it is used too often, it will start to wear thin.’

‘Our CIA paymasters will continue to believe it because they want to

believe it. And it won't be a problem for long. It will go away. Get more volunteers. If possible, choose the ones without too many friends or surviving relatives. But get them.'

'And Project One? How are you progressing?'

Myrek frowned. 'Slowly,' he admitted. 'His mind is limited, but it is very strong. There are also many distractions. And access is becoming more difficult. Yesterday, I was hustled out after just a few minutes. I was able to administer a small boost. A help, enough to keep him on our leash. But I fear it will not last.'

'If he would only come here again,' Helga said quietly.

'I am attempting to persuade him,' Myrek told her. 'I think he will come in time. That reminds me. We are having a visitor – at four o'clock.'

Her eyes widened in surprise and fear. 'But we can't!'

'We must,' he said gently. 'He's from the White House. A direct order from the President.'

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'Why?' demanded Helga. 'It's never happened before. Even the President has only visited us once.'

'Precisely. And we want him to visit us again, so we mustn't upset him, must we? Perhaps this man is coming to check on things, to clear the way for a another visit.'

'Who is he?'

Myrek shrugged. 'Who knows? Some foreigner little Harry wants to impress.'

'A foreigner?'

'English, I think. It's just a nuisance, that's all. Though we may be able to derive some benefit from it if he reports back favourably. Certainly we cannot afford to ignore or upset him. So, lay on some kind of VIP tour will you?

Everything he should see and nothing he shouldn't. After that we'll pack him off.'

Helga frowned. 'All the same it's odd. I distrust breaks in the pattern. Who sent us this visitor?'

'Captain Howard, the President's aide. He was most insistent, discourteous even. His manner was strange.' Myrek paused. 'Perhaps you are right, Helga.'

Perhaps there is more to this than I think.'

'Precisely. Suppose this man isn't an innocent visitor but a spy?'

'Then we shall dispose of him,' said Myrek calmly. 'We may have to let him come – but we don't have to let him leave.'

The Doctor lay back in the limousine, eyes half-closed. They had left Washington's magnificent centre of state buildings, monuments and museums behind them. They had passed through the outer rings of dreadful slums and prosperous suburbs. Washington was not one city but two, each living separately as if in a different dimension to the other.

Different dimensions. . . Players. . .

The Doctor frowned and his head nodded.

The car turned off the main highway onto a minor road. Before long it turned off the minor road onto a rutted lane. From the car, all the Doctor could see was a wide expanse of open grassland. 'It's a big country,' he muttered to himself.

After another ten minutes jolting progress the car came to a halt.

The uniformed chauffeur said doubtfully, 'We're here, sir – I think.'

The Doctor wound down the window and looked out.

He saw a high wire fence, a gate and a sentry. Beyond the wire was a scattering of huts, and behind the huts loomed a miniature castle.

'Yes,' said the Doctor. 'I'm rather afraid we are.' He got out of the car into the stifling afternoon heat.

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There was a hut next to the gate and from it emerged a very large Marine sergeant with dark, crew-cut hair and a battleship jaw.

Before the Doctor could speak he said, 'Government property, buddy, no tourists. On your way.'

'Is this the home of *Project Kali*?' asked the Doctor.

The Marine blinked, but otherwise managed to show no surprise. 'None of your business. Move it.'

The Doctor walked up close to the wire until he was eye-to-eye with the soldier on the other side. 'My name is Dr Smith,' he said in a cold, level voice.

'Sure it is,' said the Marine uneasily.

Slowly, the Doctor took a plastic folder from his pocket and held it out.

'This contains my credentials and a special pass. Examine them and hand them back.' He hesitated a moment before adding: 'I expect you'll recognise the signature of the President of the United States of America.'

The Marine took the folder, examined the contents and passed it back. His face seemed to have gone slightly pale, and he swallowed before starting to speak. 'Sir,' he began.

The Doctor over-rode him, waving away the attempted apology 'Now get in that hut, get on the phone to whoever is in charge and tell them that Dr Smith is here. Then get that gate open. I'm here at the direct orders of the President, your Commander-in-Chief. Don't keep me waiting.'

'Sir!' The sergeant marched smartly into the hut. The Doctor got back into the car. A few minutes later, the sergeant marched out of the hut, and waved to the sentry to open the gate. He saluted to the Doctor sitting in the car, and the Doctor waved back to him. The car drove through and the gates closed behind it.

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Chapter Twenty

Inspection

The limousine pulled up by the arched stone doorway of the fake castle. The Doctor got out and found a small sallow-faced man waiting

to greet him.

‘Professor Myrek? I am Dr Smith.’

Myrek decided to seize the initiative, to put this inconvenient visitor in his place from the very start.

‘I am sorry to say that this visit is far from convenient, Dr Smith. I am extremely busy.’ He made a point of checking his watch as he spoke.

It didn’t work too well.

‘As Captain Howard was forced to remind you, this visit of inspection is not a matter of your convenience, but of the President’s orders, *Professor*.’ The Doctor pronounced the word *Professor* as if he strongly suspected Myrek had obtained his degree through a mail-order catalogue. ‘As for your being busy,’

he went on, ‘my good friend Harry tells me that you have been, perhaps, a little *too* busy.’ He did not wait for a reply from the astounded Myrek. ‘Shall we go inside?’

He marched past Myrek into the house.

Myrek followed, his mind in a whirl. Could this appalling Doctor know?

Could he possibly *know*? If so, he must be killed at once. With an effort Myrek restrained himself. This was no casual visitor; this was someone high in the President’s favour. Killing him might cause appalling complications.

Certainly it was hard to believe that his disappearance would go unnoticed.

First, he must be sure that there was no alternative. There were, after all, other options he could pursue. Myrek followed the Doctor into the high-ceilinged, stone-flagged hall.

The Doctor looked round. ‘Charming!’ he said disparagingly.

‘I was told nothing about an inspection,’ Myrek protested. ‘Captain Howard merely spoke of a distinguished visitor.’

‘No doubt he was trying to spare your feelings, being diplomatic,’ said the Doctor wearily. ‘He is, after all, a diplomat. However, if you doubt my mission

– you have a telephone?’

‘Of course.’

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‘Then call the White House and speak to Captain Howard yourself. Or perhaps you would prefer to speak to the President in person.’ The Doctor laughed harshly. ‘However, I doubt if he will be very pleased at having his orders questioned.’

The Doctor made the offer in the knowledge that both Howard and the President would be unavailable all afternoon. As he’d hoped, Myrek didn’t dare to take him up on it.

‘No, no, that will not be necessary.’

A dark-haired, stern-faced woman came marching down the hall towards them.

‘Miss Helga Stoll, my assistant,’ said Myrek. There was a hint of relief in his voice as his reinforcements arrived in the formidable form of Miss Stoll.

The Doctor bowed. ‘Charmed.’ He didn’t sound it.

‘The Doctor is here on an official visit of inspection,’ Myrek went on. ‘We must see that he is given every facility.’

A fleeting expression of astonishment floated across Helga Stoll’s face. ‘Of course,’ she said. ‘May we offer you some refreshment, Dr Smith?’

‘Thank you, no,’ said the Doctor. ‘I lunched with the President,’ he said.

‘This lavish White House hospitality. . . ’ His face hardened. ‘Moreover my time is limited. The President expects my report to be with him by this evening. I do not have to remind you both how much depends on it. Let us begin the tour at once.’

‘Of course,’ said Myrek. ‘If you will come this way?’

They led the Doctor into a vast hall. It had been converted into an open-plan laboratory, split into different sections.

They made their way over to a long table divided by numerous partitions.

Here men and women, broken up into two-person teams, faced each other across the table. One of the pair held up a series of cards, the *back* of the cards towards his or her partner. The cards held different basic symbols. As each card was held up, the other partner tried to guess the symbol, calling out,

‘Star’, ‘Square’, ‘Circle’, ‘Lines’, or ‘Cross’. After each call, the person holding the card noted success or failure, then impassively held up another reversed card.

‘There are twenty-five cards in each pack,’ explained Myrek ‘Five cards of each symbol, well shuffled of course.’

‘The basic Rhine cards experiment,’ said the Doctor wearily. ‘J.B Rhine, Institute of Parapsychology, Durham, North Carolina. Sometime in the thirties, wasn’t it?’ The Doctor was not at all sure how he came to know this, but he did. ‘The President is expecting rather more for his money than a repeat of a twenty-year-old experiment,’ he went on.

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‘The method may be old but it is tried and tested,’ said Myrek defensively.

‘Moreover, we have discovered subjects of extraordinary ability. If you will stand behind this gentleman here?’

Myrek positioned the Doctor behind one of the cardholders. He himself stood behind the man’s partner, a thin, faded-looking blonde girl, a hand on her shoulder.

‘Concentrate, my dear.’

He nodded to the card-holder who started holding up his cards, one by one.

In a quavering voice the girl began calling out the symbols.

‘Circle. . . square. . . circle. . . star. . . wavy lines. . .’

The Doctor watched, and saw that the girl scored far more hits than misses.

He also noticed that towards the end of the sequence her voice became more feeble and the percentage of misses increased. As if she

were being tired out by the effort. Yet she had been here, guessing the cards, before the Doctor came in. Strange that she should tire so suddenly just now. . .

When the twenty-five card sequence was finished, she looked eagerly up at Myrek. 'Did I do well, Professor?'

'Very well, my dear,' he said soothingly. 'Very well indeed. Just carry on, now.'

The girl put a shaking hand to her temples. 'Could I rest, just for a little while. My head. . .'

Myrek scowled. But his expression was quickly replaced with a look of kindly concern.

'Yes, of course.' He nodded to the girl's partner. 'Take Maria to the rest area.'

Fifteen minutes.' As the girl's partner led her away, Myrek turned eagerly to the Doctor. 'You saw, Doctor? Nineteen hits out of twenty-five. Rhine never achieved results like that.'

'Incredible,' said the Doctor deliberately. 'Quite incredible.'

His ironic tone was obviously lost on Myrek.

'It is, isn't it?' he said boastfully. 'The girl is one of our star subjects.'

'You want to take good care of her,' said the Doctor. 'She looked all in. You don't want her dying on you.'

There was a flicker of alarm in Myrek's eyes, but it vanished almost at once.

'The advantage of the Rhine experiments is that they can be used as a first filter,' he said. 'Those who show particular promise can move on to more demanding experiments. This way, Dr Smith.' He set off towards the door.

The Doctor paused before following. He leaned over the chair where the girl, Maria, had been sitting, so that his palms were pressing down on the top of the table the other side of it. There was a man across the table from him, small and wiry, wearing a white lab coat. He was collecting the abandoned pack of cards.

‘Cross, wavy lines, another cross, then a circle,’ the Doctor said quietly to the man. Then he winked.

The man stared after him for a moment, bemused. Then slowly, as if not wanting to believe, he turned the top card of the deck. It was a cross.

From the other side of the table, the Doctor nodded encouragingly.

The next card showed a series of wavy lines, like a child’s drawing of the sea. After that there was another cross. Then a circle.

The man with the cards was staring dumbly at the Doctor as Myrek returned to the table. ‘Doctor?’ Myrek asked. ‘Is there a problem?’ He looked from the Doctor to the man with the cards, then back again.

‘No problem,’ the Doctor said, smiling. ‘Just conducting a small test of my own.’

Myrek nodded as if he understood what the Doctor meant, though he clearly had not a clue. Then he led the Doctor over to a long table covered in green baize. Once again the subjects worked in pairs. One threw the dice, the other concentrated. The thrower then recorded the result.

‘An experiment in telekinesis,’ explained Myrek. ‘The subjects try to influence the fall of rolled dice.’

Once again Myrek selected one of his best subjects to demonstrate.

He put a hand on the man’s shoulder and whispered, ‘Sixes! Throw double sixes!’

The man threw three double sixes in a row, then slumped exhausted against the table.

‘Incredible,’ said the Doctor again. ‘If your budget is cut off, you have only to send him to Las Vegas!’

Neither Myrek nor Helga Stoll so much as smiled.

The Doctor watched their lack of reaction for a moment, then picked up the dice. ‘May I?’ he asked, although he was already examining them.

‘They aren’t weighted or anything,’ Helga said shortly.

‘Mmm,’ the Doctor agreed. ‘So I see. Just perfectly ordinary dice. So statistically there’s the same probability of throwing a double six as any other combination. Doubles, anyway.’

‘Exactly,’ Helga Stoll said impatiently.

‘Like a double four, for example,’ the Doctor said.

‘Yes, Doctor,’ Myrek said. ‘I do understand probability theory. Now, may we move on?’

‘Of course. I’m so sorry.’ Casually, the Doctor tossed the dice back onto the table as he turned to follow Myrek and Helga. He did not bother to look back.

He knew already, even without the muted gasps of the people round the table, the people who had heard the exchange.

They had come up on double four.

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In an adjoining laboratory, men and women sat alone at little tables in a series of darkened cubicles. Before each one was a sketch-pad and pencil, pinned in a circle of light from concealed spotlights in the ceiling. Some were writing, some were drawing, others were simply gazing into space.

‘These are our experiments in Remote Viewing,’ said Myrek in hushed tones.

‘Each one of them is working with a partner. The partner goes to a spot somewhere in our grounds. They relax, concentrate, and try to send a picture or a description of their position back here.’

He went into one of the cubicles and laid his hand on the man’s shoulder.

‘Concentrate,’ he whispered. ‘Concentrate.’

The man went rigid then began drawing feverishly on his pad. Seconds later he had produced a rough sketch of a lake surrounded by trees.

Myrek turned to Helga. ‘Check on the position of number seven’s partner, please.’

Helga checked the list on her clipboard. 'The partner of number seven is by the lake.'

Myrek patted number seven on the back. 'Well done, my boy.'

Number seven collapsed, his head in his hands.

'You see, Doctor,' said Myrek triumphantly. 'Imagine the potential for espionage. An agent penetrates an enemy missile-site. He can send a description of what he sees back to base *instantly*. No radio to be traced, no despatches to be intercepted. Just the power of pure thought.'

'Yes, but *whose* thought?' said the Doctor, darkly.

They came out of the laboratory and strolled back towards Myrek's office.

There they sat down in armchairs and Helga served coffee.

'Well, Dr Smith, what do you think?' asked Myrek eagerly. 'I have much more to show you, but what is your impression so far?'

'Well, you have certainly made an impression on me.' The Doctor's tone was reasonable, upbeat even. He sipped at his coffee. 'My impression is that you have been engaged in a sustained attempt to deceive me,' said the Doctor calmly. 'Which means that you have been deceiving and defrauding the CIA and the President himself. Quite enough, I imagine, to justify a charge of high treason.' He helped himself to a splash more cream. 'You'll probably finish up in the electric chair.'

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Chapter Twenty-one

Achievement

Myrek jumped up, spilling his coffee. 'Doctor, this is an unfounded and abominable charge –'

'Oh, sit down and drink your coffee,' said the Doctor wearily. 'Can't you see when the game's up?'

Sulkily Myrek subsided.

Helga Stoll neither moved nor reacted. She sat quite still, watching the

Doctor with snake-like intensity.

‘It is quite evident that the only paranormal powers on display today have been yours,’ the Doctor went on. ‘Yours and possibly those of your charming assistant. You both seem to have the ability to act as a kind of psychic catalyst.

You boost what few powers your unfortunate volunteers possess, using them as a kind of amplifying transmitter. No doubt that is the way you obtain your impressive results – and your impressive funding.’

Kill him, thought Myrek. Kill him and run.

‘However,’ the Doctor went on, ‘all is not lost. I happen to know that there is one field in which your experiments have succeeded brilliantly. Show me those experiments and I may yet return to the President with a highly favourable report.

‘I have no idea to what experiments you refer,’ said Myrek stiffly.

‘To your experiments in long distance mind-control, of course,’ said the Doctor. ‘The ones you couldn’t resist testing in the field. The US Marine who attacked a Russian diplomat. The lieutenant who told his troops to open fire on the Russians. The diplomat who tried to run down a Russian in the car park. No doubt there are others.’

‘I have absolutely no idea what you’re talking about,’ Marek stammered.

‘Please, don’t trouble to deny it,’ said the Doctor persuasively. ‘You have nothing to fear. There has been some damage, some casualties. These things can be hushed up. They have been hushed up. Let me go back to the President with proof that these techniques work and your future is assured.’

An unholy joy was taking the place of Marek’s panic. Obviously his inquisitor knew of some of the minor incidents he had caused. Not only knew of them but was prepared to endorse them. *But he didn’t know of the attempt to 139*

use those same techniques on the President. If I keep my head, thought Marek, I can use the Doctor to reach the President – and win!

His mind filled with his future triumph, Marek said solemnly, ‘Very well, Dr Smith. Since you know so much, you may as well know the rest. Come with me and you shall see my greatest achievement.’

With Helga Stoll trailing dutifully at his heels, Marek led the Doctor out of the main building, through the overgrown gardens and across to a Quonset hut, very much larger and more isolated than the rest. There was a Marine sentry at the door.

The sentry saluted, Myrek opened the door and they all went inside.

They were in a large hall, divided into different areas.

There were rows of couches along each side of the main area. Each couch was occupied by a man or woman, lying stretched out, their heads connected by suction pads to the tangle of electronic equipment at the side of each couch.

White-coated assistants patrolled, looking over them.

The Doctor surveyed the scene without expression. 'What is happening here?'

'Telepathic amplification,' said Marek proudly. 'Every one of these subjects is a human transmitter. Their minds are linked to their unwitting partners, all of whom are somewhere out in the world.'

'Unwitting?' said the Doctor sceptically.

'Oh yes. All that is needed is that the partner is in our hands for a few hours. Through a mixture of drugs and hypnotism, we ensure that they have no memory of the event. The partners then resume their normal lives, quite unaware that they have become, as it were, telepathic receivers.'

'Receiving messages transmitted by you, through the minds of these subjects?'

'Precisely so,' said Marek, pleased at finding an understanding audience.

'Messages, images, commands. Received the instant they are transmitted, with distance no barrier.'

'What about the time factor?' asked the Doctor. 'Is the link permanent?'

'Alas, no. It fades over a period. The amount of time depends on the strength of the partner's mind. It can be reestablished if the partner can be brought back here for treatment, but that, of course, is not

always possible.’

‘How effective is the link when it is first established?’

Marek went over to the couch at the far end, which was occupied by a thin grey-haired man. The Doctor and Helga followed.

‘This subject’s link is newly forged,’ said Myrek. ‘Allow me to demonstrate.’

He unhooked a microphone attached to the equipment, and spoke into it in a low, compelling voice.

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‘You are angry. . . angry. People are treating you badly, you are not valued as you should be. You are angry. . . so angry that you could kill. . . ’

The grey-haired man’s face twisted with rage and his body writhed.

‘Angry, angry. . . ’ he muttered.

‘This man’s mind-partner is a minor civil servant,’ explained Marek. ‘No-one of any importance. Now he will be experiencing feelings of extreme frustration and violent rage. He may attack, possibly even kill someone. His wife, perhaps, or his boss. Perhaps a stranger he passes on the street. It will be interesting to see what happens.’

The Doctor’s face was impassive. ‘Most interesting,’ he said. Then, more sharply: ‘All right, I think that’s enough.’

But Myrek wasn’t listening. He seemed caught up in his work. ‘I will reinforce the message.’ Myrek spoke again into the microphone. ‘You are angry.

You must kill. . . kill. . . kill. . . ’

The Doctor grabbed the microphone, pulling it away from Myrek. His eyes were burning with anger. ‘I said, that’s enough.’

Suddenly the grey-haired man opened his eyes and stared up at them.

‘No,’ he shrieked. ‘No! I will not kill! I will not. . . ’

His body arched, flopped backwards and was suddenly still.

Myrek nodded to Helga Stoll who stepped forward and took the man's pulse. First at the wrist and then the neck. She shook her head.

'He is dead, Professor.'

Myrek shook his head. 'Unfortunate.'

'Unfortunate?' the Doctor echoed softly. 'There was no need to go that far.'

This man is dead, and we have no idea what happened to his mind-partner.'

He sighed, and wiped his eyes. When he spoke again he seemed calmer, more collected. 'Nevertheless, an effective demonstration, I grant you. Apart from this. . . unfortunate side effect.'

Myrek nodded, seemingly oblivious to the Doctor's earlier anger. 'You see,'

he said, 'the programme suffers a certain amount of wastage. Some of the transmission subjects object to the commands they are ordered to send. If the objections persist they can lead to madness, suicide, or as in this case heart-failure or brain haemorrhage.' He beckoned two white-coated assistants, who unhooked the body from the machine and carried it away. 'Arrange for a suitable replacement, please, Helga.'

'Yes, Professor.'

'Doctor, let us continue our tour.'

'I think I have seen enough,' the Doctor said coldly. 'More than enough in fact. It is time for me to leave. Please summon my driver.'

'At once, Doctor. See to it please, Helga.'

Helga Stoll hurried out of the hut and the Doctor and Myrek followed.

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As they walked through the gardens Myrek said, 'May I hope that your report will now be favourable, Doctor?'

'Believe me, Professor Myrek,' said the Doctor, 'Few men have impressed me as you have. I intend to see that you get the reward you deserve.'

‘And you will ask the President to visit us again?’

‘At the first opportunity,’ the Doctor agreed. ‘I am sure he will want to see what I’ve seen for himself.’

Myrek and Helga Stoll stood in the doorway of the old house, watching the Doctor’s car drive through the gates and disappear down the lane.

‘I’m not convinced we should have let him leave,’ said Helga Stoll.

‘Nonsense,’ said Myrek jubilantly. ‘Don’t you see? He came here full of suspicion and I won him over. He will report favourably to the President.’

There is every chance his report will persuade the President to come and see us.’

‘Who is this mysterious “he”?’ asked a voice behind them.

They turned and saw a tall man in a black trenchcoat standing in the hall.

They knew that he had not been in the house earlier, nor had he come through the only gate. He was just – there.

‘Axel!’ said Myrek cheerfully. ‘I’m afraid you’ve missed our visitor.’

‘What visitor?’

‘Truman sent some kind of Inspector. He was hostile at first, but I showed him the Special Project and now he’s on our side. He may even persuade the President to visit us again.’

‘Tell me what happened,’ Axel said.

Myrek gave a hurried account of the Doctor’s visit.

‘Describe this man,’ Axel snapped, his face clouding over.

Myrek did so.

‘And his name?’

‘Smith,’ said Helga Stoll. ‘Dr John Smith.’

‘You are fools, both of you,’ said Axel angrily. ‘Could you not

recognise our old enemy the Doctor?’

‘He can’t have been the Doctor,’ protested Myrek. ‘He was sent by the White House, I spoke to the President’s aide.’

‘It was the Doctor,’ Axel ground out. ‘He has changed his shape and he pretends not to know us, but it is certainly the Doctor. I recognise his style.’

‘We’re finished,’ said Myrek. ‘He saw everything, he will betray us to the President.’

‘No, he won’t,’ said Axel.

‘Why not?’

‘Because I shall kill him first.’

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Chapter Twenty-two

Report

‘I’m afraid you can’t see the President, Doctor,’ said Kent Howard.

‘But it really is most terribly urgent.’

‘I’m sorry but he’s out of the country. He left for secret truce talks in Paris after the reception.’

‘When does he get back?’

‘Two or three days. Depends how the talks go.’

By brandishing his Philby-provided credentials, and a mixture of forceful insistence and charm, the Doctor had managed to get back inside the White House in time to catch Kent Howard before he left for the day.

The attaché had changed out of his white uniform and was now looking equally glamorous in evening dress.

The Doctor considered for a moment. ‘Then I must make my report to you.’

Howard looked at his watch. ‘I’m due at a reception at the French

Embassy very shortly.'

'It will have to wait,' said the Doctor sternly. 'This is a matter of interna-tional, no, *global* importance.'

Resignedly, Howard sat down. 'Well, OK. But please keep it short.'

The Doctor gave him a brief and concise account of what he had seen and learned on his visit to *Project Kali*. Howard listened in mounting horror and disbelief.

'Who are these people, Dr Smith? Are they communists? What do they want?'

'Their real target is the President himself. You've already seen some of the results.'

'But why? What do they want him to do?' Howard demanded.

'Drop the bomb. Start World War Three.'

Howard was appalled. 'Why? What good will that do them?'

'They just want to make as much trouble as possible. The place ought to be closed down at once, Captain Howard. Will you inform the authorities?'

'It wouldn't do any good. That place is CIA, and nobody wants to mess with them. Police and FBI wouldn't touch it.'

'Then who would?' the Doctor wanted to know.

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'It would take the direct intervention of the President himself.'

'Who isn't here. . . You must tell him the whole story as soon as he gets back, Captain Howard. Let me know when he arrives and I'll come over and back you up. And when he does get back, don't let Myrek anywhere near him. Above all,' the Doctor told him emphatically, 'don't let the President visit *Project Kali*.'

'How am I supposed to stop him?'

'Kidnap him if you have to. Lock him in a cupboard. If they get him in that place for a couple of hours he'll come straight back here and give orders to bomb China or Russia or Coney Island or somewhere.'

‘I’ll do my best.’

‘I must go. I’ve delayed you enough. Don’t forget, talk to the President as soon as he gets back. Let me know when he’s arriving, and I’ll come too.’

Captain Howard was more used to giving orders than taking them, but he found himself nodding obediently.

‘I promise. Are you OK for transport, need a taxi?’

The Doctor shook his head. ‘Mr Anderson’s driver very kindly offered to wait.’

The Doctor found the car waiting in the White House car park and climbed into the back.

‘Where to, Dr Smith?’

‘British Embassy please. I hope to catch Mr Philby before he leaves his office. And thank you very much for all your help.’

‘My pleasure, Doctor.’

The car sped away down Pennsylvania Avenue and the Doctor sank thank-fully back in his seat.

Suddenly he became aware that he was not alone in the back of the car.

Which was strange, since the back seat had certainly been empty when he got in.

He turned his head and saw, without much surprise that Axel was sitting on the seat beside him, an automatic in his hand.

‘You do keep popping up, don’t you?’ said the Doctor wearily.

‘No luck with the President, then, Doctor?’ asked Axel mockingly. ‘Out of the country, I hear.’

‘I gave a full report of Myrek’s activities to the President’s aide.’

‘Who’s going to listen to an aide? Besides, it may be all over before the President gets back. This isn’t our only operation, you know.’

‘The President will listen,’ said the Doctor confidently. ‘I shall be there

myself to see that he does.'

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Axel shook his head. 'I'm afraid not. Whatever happens, you won't be here to see it.'

'Why bother killing me? I mean if you're right and the entire planet's going anyway. . . '

'Personal satisfaction,' said Axel. 'You've given me a great deal of trouble, you know.'

'I suppose I have.' The Doctor grinned suddenly. 'Did you have a nice swim?'

he asked.

'And bonus points, of course,' Axel went on, ignoring the jibe. 'I shall get bonus points for disposing of a long-time enemy.'

'Bonus points?' asked the Doctor, puzzled.

'Oh yes. The whole scoring system is different for an Endgame.'

'A what game?'

'An Endgame.'

'Oh,' the Doctor said, 'you mean like in chess? Haven't played much recently.' He paused to look out of the window. 'Maybe I should take it up again. Practice a bit, you know.'

'Don't worry about it, Doctor. But you are right, like chess it is all a game.'

Surely you realise that? But you're not going to be able to play any more.' He raised the gun. 'Goodbye, Doctor.'

It had been a long, hard day, and the Doctor was feeling tired and irritable.

'And goodbye to you,' he said.

He hurled himself on Axel, using his left hand to knock up Axel's gun arm so that it went harmlessly over his shoulder. He opened the car door with his right hand, grabbed Axel with both hands and heaved

him bodily out of the car.

He leaned forward and grabbed the door handle and slammed the door closed.

The driver's alarmed voice came from the front of the car.

'What the hell's going on back there, Dr Smith?'

'Just a rather aggressive hitch-hiker,' said the Doctor. 'I got rid of him.'

'Jeez,' said the driver. 'And they told me you Brits were civilised!'

The Doctor looked out of the back window. There was no sprawling figure lying amongst the traffic on Pennsylvania Avenue.

'Don't worry about it,' he said. 'I don't think he's hurt.'

When the Doctor arrived in Kim Philby's office, he found Philby clearing his desk, ramming things into an already bulging briefcase.

'Thank goodness you've turned up,' said Philby. 'I was afraid I was going to have to leave you behind. I've been ordered home.'

'We can't leave now,' protested the Doctor. 'There's too much going on.'

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He told Philby about his day. The meeting with Howard and Truman, the visit to *Project Kali*, the second meeting with Howard.

'I've done what you asked me to,' he said. 'I've discovered the centre of the Players' operation. We have to act now to close it down.'

'We'll have to leave that to Howard and to Harry Truman,' said Philby.

'They'll sort it out. Harry Truman is –'

'I know, I know,' said the Doctor impatiently. 'A "tough little sonovabitch".'

Why must you go back now? What's so urgent in London all of a sudden?'

Philby moved closer and lowered his voice. 'I've been ordered back to face an enquiry into the disappearance of Burgess and Maclean.'

'Ah,' said the Doctor, equally quietly. 'I'd rather forgotten your – ambiguous status. Are you in trouble?'

'I could be. On the other hand, I may be able to talk my way out of it. I don't think they've got any hard evidence. But I've got to be there to look innocent – and to defend myself.'

'The absent are always guilty?' the Doctor suggested.

'Exactly. If I stay here, I'll just be arrested and shipped home and things will look worse for me. You'll be arrested eventually if I leave you here alone. I'm sorry, Doctor, but you've got to come back to London with me.'

'I suppose I have – but I hate to leave unfinished business behind.'

'You've done all you can,' said Philby. 'It's up to Howard and Anderson, now.'

They'll protect the President, it's their job.'

The Doctor still wasn't convinced. 'What about Myrek? If he panics and makes a run for it, he could get away.'

'They'll get him,' said Philby.

'Who will?'

The Secret Service, the Police, the CIA, somebody. . . It's not your responsibility any more, Doctor.'

'Isn't it?'

Philby smiled. 'For someone who didn't want to get involved you're surprisingly keen.'

'That place is an abomination,' said the Doctor furiously. 'They're killing innocent people at long range for the fun of it, and torturing and killing more innocent people in the process.' His anger subsided as suddenly as it had come. 'Still I suppose you're right, it's not my concern any more. I've done what I can.'

He looked up as Jim Anderson rushed into the room.

‘Kim, glad I caught you. I heard the news and wanted to say goodbye. Good luck in London. Your taxi’s here by the way.’

They shook hands.

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‘Thanks for coming, Jim,’ said Philby. ‘I’m a little short on friends at the moment.’

‘I’m sure it will all get sorted out,’ said Anderson. ‘Doctor! How did it go at that *Project Kali* place?’

The Doctor was about to tell him when Philby grabbed his arm.

‘No time for that now. Come on, we’ll miss our plane.’

‘Talk to Captain Howard,’ yelled the Doctor as Philby dragged him away. ‘He knows the whole story. *And keep those Kali people away from the President. . .*’

The Doctor and Philby caught their plane with minutes to spare and settled back into a couple of first-class seats.

Philby looked round eagerly for the drinks trolley and grabbed two double whiskies when it arrived.

He raised his glass in a toast. ‘To London!’

‘To London,’ said the Doctor. ‘Feeling optimistic, are you?’

Philby drained his glass. ‘*Digo, paciencia y barajar!*’

‘I say, patience and shuffle the cards!’ translated the Doctor. ‘Old Cervantes was always saying that.’

Philby gave him a sideways look and said, ‘As long as you’re still in the game you’ve still got a chance.’

‘The game,’ said the Doctor thoughtfully. ‘Axel kept talking about it all being a game. He said he’d get bonus points for killing me.’

‘Did he? When?’

‘I had a brief encounter with him on the way to your office.’

Quickly, the Doctor told him what had happened.

‘What’s he doing in Washington?’ said Philby.

‘Hunting me, I think. He seems to bear some kind of a grudge.’

Not surprising, is it? He must be getting pretty tired of you throwing him out of things. How many times has he attacked you? Oughtn’t he to be dead by now?’

‘He would be if he were human.’

‘Let’s not start that again, Doctor,’ Philby said wearily. ‘I’ve got quite enough terrestrial worries on my plate at the moment.’ He waved his empty glass at a passing stewardess, and she brought him another large whisky. ‘I’m really glad we’re travelling back together,’ he went on.

‘That’s kind of you. Why?’

‘For one thing, as long as we’re together there’s a chance I can keep us both out of trouble.’

‘And for another?’

‘To be honest with you, Doctor,’ Philby said, ‘I need you to do something for me.’

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‘You do? What?’

Philby smiled. ‘I want you to defect to the Russians and go to Moscow.’

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Chapter Twenty-three

Betrayed

The Doctor looked at Philby in outraged astonishment.

‘*What!*’

‘I want you to go to Moscow,’ said Philby blandly.

‘You’re mad,’ said the Doctor calmly. ‘Your overcomplicated life, combined with your intake of whisky, has tipped you over the edge.’

He reached out and deftly relieved Philby of his glass. It was still half full of whisky and the Doctor looked round for a stewardess to hand it to. There was nobody in sight, and the tray table in front of the Doctor's seat was well within Philby's reach. So he downed the whisky in one and handed the glass back.

Kim Philby smiled, untroubled by the insult or the loss of his drink. 'Not a bit of it. I've been a double-agent and a drinker for twenty years and I can handle both. I assure you my reasons are thoroughly sane.'

'You may as well tell me,' said the Doctor resignedly. 'But I warn you, it won't make any difference. I am not going to Moscow.'

Philby's voice was low and urgent. 'Don't you see, Doctor, we've made a terrible mistake.'

'We have?'

'There's been a terrible gap in our thinking. You worked out from my files that the Players had an operation in Washington. You did brilliant work in tracking it down and uncovering it. *But what about their operation in Moscow?*'

In spite of himself, the Doctor was intrigued. 'Do they have one?'

'Of course they do!'

'What makes you so sure?'

'I have a contact at the Russian Embassy in London, part of my overcomplicated life. A man called Vasili Mikoyan, very nice chap. Supposed to be Cultural Attaché at the Soviet Embassy. Actually he's KGB, of course. I don't think you met him. You encountered some of his minions, though – and damaged them rather severely.'

An expression of distaste flickered over the Doctor's face. 'I remember. Go on.'

'Vasili had a despatch from a contact of his in Moscow – a member of Stalin's personal bodyguard. Stalin's old and ill now, spends most of his time drunk 149

in his *dacha* outside Moscow. A *dacha*'s a sort of luxury bungalow –'

'I know what a *dacha* is,' said the Doctor.

Philby looked at him in surprise. 'You speak a little Russian, Doctor?'

That will come in very useful in Moscow.'

'It would be if I was going to Moscow,' said the Doctor. 'Which I'm not,' he added.

Undeterred, Philby pressed on. 'According to Vasili's contact – his name's Timenko, by the way – the old boy's getting more and more paranoid – and more and more warlike. He's convinced that when the Americans have dealt with Communist China they'll come after him next. He's talking about a first-strike attack on America.'

'He might talk about it, but he surely won't be mad enough to do it.'

'That's just the point, he *is* mad. A lifetime of vodka and absolute power has rotted his brain. You know why he's so ill? He refuses to let any doctor come near him. They'd be too scared anyway. He's taken up with some sort of psychic healer, some woman called Madam Razetskia.'

'I really don't see what all this has got to do with me –'

'It's got everything to do with you, Doctor. We've left the job half done. And the unfinished half is the really important part. Don't you see?'

'No, I don't see,' said the Doctor irritably.

'You've helped to put an end to the Players' American operation – but that wasn't working too well anyway. The minor incidents they caused were pretty nasty for those involved, but they never really did much harm. And their attempt on the President doesn't look too promising either. Harry Truman is. . . Well, we all know what he is. He's a hard man to influence, and he's got good people looking out for him.' Philby paused impressively. 'But imagine those same techniques used on a solitary, drunken dictator? Compared to Truman, Stalin would be a pushover. If the Players are operating in Moscow

– and Timenko's convinced they are – the atomic button could be pushed any day now. You're needed in Moscow, Doctor, you really are.'

It was a convincing case, well argued, but it had no effect on the Doctor.

'I'm sorry, Mr Philby, but the answer's no. I found and exposed the Players for you. The rest is up to you and your friends. If more Players

are concentrating on Stalin, they should be easy enough to find. I've kept my end of the bargain. Now I must ask you to keep yours. Return my blue box and leave me in peace.'

Philby sighed. 'I can see I'll have to be completely honest with you, Doctor.'

'That will make a pleasant change,' the Doctor remarked, his voice laden with sarcasm.

'I have another compelling reason for wanting you to go to Moscow.'

'Which is?'

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'Since Burgess and Maclean disappeared, there's been talk in the security services of a third man. Someone who tipped them off and helped them to get away. I'm currently under suspicion of being that man.'

'So you were, to all intents and purposes,' the Doctor pointed out. 'You simply used me as your puppet, your catspaw.'

'That may be so, Doctor, but you were the one actually there, on the ground.'

Now, if you defect to Moscow, then I can convince my colleagues that you are the one and only third man. That will get them off my back and buy me some time. You'll be able to come back before too long.'

'No!' said the Doctor explosively. 'For one thing, I don't actually exist as far as your security services are involved. And for another, if I wouldn't go to Russia to save the world, I'm certainly not going just to save your neck.'

Philby renewed his persuasions several times during the long flight, but the Doctor refused to listen, finally taking refuge in sleep.

He was awakened from a series of confusing and frightening dreams to find Philby leaning over him, shaking his shoulder.

'Wake up Doctor, we'll be landing very soon.'

In the taxi going back to London, Philby made one last attempt to convince the Doctor to go to Moscow.

‘All you’ve got to do is contact Vasili Mikoyan, at the Soviet Trade Delegation in Highgate and tell him you want to defect. He’ll arrange everything.’

‘For the last time, no!’

‘All right, Doctor,’ said Philby wearily. ‘You win. Go back to your flat and I’ll have your precious box delivered.’

‘Thank you,’ said the Doctor. ‘Good luck with your enquiry.’

‘I’ll get through it somehow,’ said Philby. I’ve still got one or two tricks up my sleeve. Oh, and since you’re retiring from the spy business, you’d better give me back that diplomatic passport and credentials.’

The Doctor handed over the papers. The taxi swung round a corner and Philby lurched against him for a moment. ‘Sorry,’ he said, recovering, and tucked the Doctor’s papers away.

He dropped the Doctor close to the British Museum and went off to face his superiors.

The Doctor strolled back to his flat. London didn’t seem to have changed much. But then, why should it? Despite all that had happened, he hadn’t really been away for very long.

Back at his flat, he retrieved his spare key from beneath a flowerpot and went inside. The flat too was unchanged, as dark and gloomy as ever. But it was curiously comforting to be back.

He stretched out on the sofa, waiting for the delivery van to arrive.

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* * *

Several hours later, a hammering on the door woke him from a light doze.

Eagerly the Doctor got up and opened the door. Standing on the doorstep was a tall burly man wearing a blue raincoat and a heavy moustache. In the street above, the Doctor could see a plain blue van.

‘Dr Smith?’ said the man. ‘Dr John Smith?’

‘That’s right.’

‘I am Inspector Galway, Special Branch.’

‘How do you do?’ said the Doctor. ‘I’d have thought you were a little over-qualified as a delivery man, but I believe you have some property of mine?’

The Inspector produced a sheet of paper from his inside pocket.

‘What I have is a warrant for your arrest.’ He took a whistle from his raincoat pocket and blew hard. The van doors opened and half a dozen large policemen jumped out and ran down the basement steps.

‘Let’s not have any trouble, sir, the place is surrounded.’

‘All right,’ said the Doctor. ‘What’s the charge?’

‘Espionage.’

Surrounded by policemen, the Doctor was escorted up the steps and bundled into the van.

The van drove to a grim-looking police station in Tottenham Court road, and the Doctor was taken inside, marched up to the desk and booked in.

Inspector Galway stood by, looking on.

‘Name,’ said the desk sergeant.

‘Smith.’

‘First name, John?’

‘That’s right,’ said the Doctor, mildly surprised. ‘How did you know?’

‘Call it a lucky guess. Empty your pockets will you, please, sir. You will be given a receipt for your possessions which will be returned to you when you leave.’

The Doctor put his few possessions on the desk. When he put his hand in his breast pocket he was surprised to find a thin sheaf of papers.

‘These aren’t mine.’

‘I’ll take those,’ said Galway. The sergeant took them from the Doctor and handed them over.

The booking process complete, the Doctor was taken along a stone corridor and deposited in an interview room with a policeman at the door.

The bottom half of the room was painted dark blue, the top half a hideously clashing pink. Several interview rooms had been done out like this when some Home Office psychologist published a report claiming the colour combination was soothing. In fact, most people, cops and criminals alike, found it deeply irritating.

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The interview room contained a central wooden table, scarred with cigarette burns, despite the presence of several tin-lid ashtrays. There were wooden chairs on either side of the table.

The Doctor was offered a cigarette which he refused and a cup of tea which he accepted. The tea arrived shortly, together with a plate of biscuits.

The Doctor sat at the table, sipping his tea, apparently calm and relaxed.

‘England is a very civilised country to be arrested in,’ he said amiably. ‘In some places they hit you and shout at you a lot.’

‘Sounds like the voice of experience,’ said the young constable at the door.

He was an amiable giant of a man, quite the largest policeman the Doctor had ever seen. ‘Been arrested often, have we, sir?’

‘I’m not sure,’ said the Doctor vaguely. ‘I suppose I must have been. This place produces a powerful feeling of déjà-vu.’

The interview-room door opened and Inspector Galway came in accompanied by a tall thin young man in plain clothes and a uniformed policewoman with a notebook.

Inspector Galway and the young man took seats opposite the Doctor and the policewoman sat at the corner of the table, notebook and pencil at the ready.

The Doctor watched these preparations with interest.

‘Shouldn’t you be taping this?’ he asked. ‘Or doesn’t that come in till

later?’

Galway ignored him. ‘I am Inspector Galway of Special Branch, this Detective Constable Jonathan, also Special Branch, and this is WPC Marley.’

‘How do you do?’ said the Doctor politely. ‘Anyone care for a biscuit?’

‘Why don’t we just start at the beginning?’ said Galway in a friendly tone.

‘Why not?’ agreed the Doctor.

‘Suppose you tell us how you were first recruited to spy for the Russians?’

‘I can’t.’

‘Why not?’

‘Because I wasn’t – recruited, I mean. I am not a Russian spy.’

‘We have information that tells is differently.’

‘Then it’s wrong.’

Galway produced the sheaf of flimsies. ‘These papers were found in your pocket. They bear the seal of the Secret Intelligence Service and relate to confidential security matters. How do you explain your possession of them?’

‘They’re not mine. They were planted on me.’

‘Who by?’

‘I’ve no idea. You, possibly, you’d have had plenty of chances to do it in that police van.’

‘Nonsense,’ barked Galway. ‘You stole those papers to sell to your Russian paymasters.’

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‘I didn’t steal them and I don’t even know what’s in them.’

Galway jumped to his feet and stood looming over the Doctor.

‘Stop lying, you commie bastard!’ he roared. ‘You can have it easy or you can have it hard. I know how to deal with swine like you.’

He aimed a mighty cuff at the Doctor that would have knocked him off his chair if it had landed. But the blow didn’t land. Still sitting, the Doctor reached up and caught Galway’s wrist, arresting his arm in mid-air.

Galway was a big powerful man but he found himself unable to move.

‘Stop that,’ said the Doctor sternly. ‘It’s an extremely unintelligent way of conducting an interrogation.’ He nodded towards the shocked-looking detective constable and policewoman. ‘What’s more, you’re setting these young people a very bad example.’

He held Galway a moment longer and then thrust him away.

Galway sat down, breathing hard.

‘Let’s stop wasting time, shall we?’ said the Doctor. ‘I’m not a Russian spy, just the reverse. I’ve been working on a freelance basis for British Intelligence.

I suggest you contact a Mr Philby of MI6 and ask him to come down here. He knows me and he’ll vouch for me.’

Galway burst out laughing. He turned to the detective-constable, who was smiling broadly.

‘Hear that? He wants to see Mr Philby. Mr Philby will vouch for him. That’s rich, that is!’

The Doctor looked at their faces and realised that the amusement was perfectly genuine.

‘I wish you’d let me in on the joke,’ he said quietly.

‘I’ll tell you what the joke is, sunshine,’ said Galway. ‘The joke is you giving Mr Philby as a reference.’

‘What’s so funny about that?’

‘Mr Philby supplied the information that led to your arrest.’

Defector

The Doctor's interrogation went on for some time after that, but it was quite clear that it wasn't getting anywhere.

Galway kept thundering out demands for a confession, though he didn't try any more violence.

The Doctor kept repeating brief denials of guilt, alternating them with demands to be allowed to confront Kim Philby.

Eventually, Galway pushed his chair back in disgust, and stood up.

'All right, pack him off to the Scrubs for a while then we'll try again. Maybe a few weeks of cells and slopping out will make him more talkative.'

'Just a moment,' protested the Doctor. 'What about my rights?'

'Don't talk to me about your rights, sunshine,' growled Galway. 'You're a spy and a traitor. As far as I'm concerned, you haven't got any.'

'Surely I have the right to see a lawyer and make a phone call?' persisted the Doctor. 'And don't you have to charge me by a certain time or let me go?'

I haven't even been cautioned yet, let alone charged.'

'Special-Emergency-Powers-Defence-of-the-REALM-Act,' rattled off Galway, all in one breath.

'Nonsense,' said the Doctor. 'You just made all that up!'

'Maybe I did,' said Galway. He leaned menacingly over the Doctor. 'All the same, I can keep you locked up just as long as I like, sunshine. I can lose your file, lock you in a cell and throw away the key. And if you're not a lot more helpful next time we talk – believe me, I will!'

The Doctor looked thoughtfully at him. 'Did Mr Philby ask for you to be assigned to my case? You personally, I mean?'

Galway looked startled. 'As a matter of fact, he did – we've worked together before. Why?'

'He chose well,' said the Doctor. 'You're a very, very stupid man.'

Galway raised a threatening fist, thought better of it and turned and marched out. The detective constable and the policewoman followed him.

The huge constable guarding the door gave the Doctor a surprisingly friendly grin.

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‘You certainly know how to win friends and influence people,’ he said. ‘Are you really a spy?’

‘Of course not,’ said the Doctor. ‘What happens now?’

‘You hang around here till the prison van comes. Then you pile in with the handful of scrotes we’ve got banged up in our cells and go off to the Scrubs.’

‘The Scrubs?’

‘Wormwood Scrubs. It’s a prison. Not one of our nicest, I’m afraid. Very old, very overcrowded, no proper sanitation. Six men and a tin bucket all night in a cell meant for two. Slopping out in the morning. You won’t like it, Doctor.’

‘No, I don’t think I will,’ the Doctor agreed thoughtfully. ‘In fact, I don’t think I’ll go.’

‘Going to escape, are you?’

Confident in his enormous size and weight, the policeman smiled benignly down at him.

The Doctor stood up. ‘Look here –’ he began, and then broke off. ‘Can I ask your name?’

‘Oliver. Mike Oliver. Known as Tiny, for obvious reasons.’

‘Look, Tiny, you’ve been very decent to me. You’re the only one here who has. I just want you to know I’m really sorry about this.’

‘You’ll be sorrier still if you try anything,’ warned Tiny. ‘What are you on about?’

‘They’re bound to tease you for a bit,’ said the Doctor. ‘But you can live it down. I’m sure you’ll do very well. And I really am sorry.’

Tiny gave him a bemused stare. 'Sorry about what?'

All this time, the Doctor had been moving imperceptibly closer. He reached up and dropped a friendly hand on Tiny's shoulder.

'Well. . . ' he said.

It was a help that the young constable was so enormous. The Doctor was able to put his uniform over his own clothes. He didn't want to be stuck in the role of a policeman all day.

He looked back at Tiny, who was sleeping peacefully stretched out on the table. Then he opened the interview room door and stepped out into the corridor.

It is said that the Ninja warriors of ancient Japan could suppress all emanation of their personalities at will. This enabled them to pass through a crowd, or enter a crowded room without being noticed.

Perhaps the Doctor was employing some such technique. In any event, he walked steadily down the corridor across the station foyer and down the front steps. Busy with his paperwork, the desk-sergeant didn't even look up.

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At the bottom of the police station steps, the Doctor's luck ran out. A police car drew up in front of him and the driver got out. He peered suspiciously at the Doctor in his ill-fitting uniform. 'Here -' he said.

The Doctor dropped a hand on his shoulder, caught the collapsing body, and lifted it bodily into the front passenger seat. He got into the driving seat and saw that the key was still in the dashboard.

He turned the key, started the police car and drove away.

Some time later, Kim Philby, now restored at least temporarily to grace, was listening to a frantic call from Inspector Galway. There was a broad grin on his face.

'Knocked out a policeman, stole his uniform, kidnapped another policeman, stole a police car and drove away, did he? Yes, I thought he'd probably do something like that. Never mind, you held on to him for nearly an hour.'

Ignoring the squawks of protest from the other end of the line he went

on.

‘Now listen, Inspector, I want you to step up the hunt. That’s right – lots of noise, lots of publicity. But I don’t want him actually caught. And as soon as we’re sure he’s defected, you can just forget the whole thing. I take it there was no formal arrest? Good, then there’s no paperwork to lose. When I give you the word, get on to Tottenham Court Road Police Station and tell them to forget it as well, I dare say they’ll be glad to. . . What? Oh, their police car and policeman will turn up soon enough, he won’t want them for long.’ He paused and listened. ‘No. I’m not disappointed; you did exactly as I hoped. The whole thing was what you might call a deception operation and it succeeded brilliantly. . . ’

Soon after that, Philby slipped out of his office, and found a secluded phone box. Fishing out two pennies he put them in the box, pressed button A and dialled. When the cautious voice at the other end said, ‘Yes?’ he pressed button B. ‘Vasili? Kim. He’s away. Yes, so soon. Make all the arrangements and wait for him in Highgate. Yes, of course he’ll come, though probably not until after dark. What else can he do?’

Aware that he was now a hunted man, the Doctor parked the police car and its peacefully sleeping passenger in an empty mews in Camden Town. He took off the uniform, retaining, regretfully, the three pounds from Tiny’s wallet, and the loose change from his pockets. He left the neatly folded uniform on the back seat.

The Doctor walked to Camden Town tube station, and caught the Northern Line to Hampstead. He had a beer and sandwich in a secluded back street pub called ‘The Flask’, and then spent the pleasant spring afternoon strolling

on the Heath. For a long time he lay in the long grass, watching clouds move across the sky.

When it began to get dark, he got up, stretched, and started walking towards Highgate. As far as he could see, there was nothing else he could do.

The Soviet Trade Mission was a forbidding-looking shuttered building in a Highgate back street.

The Doctor walked up to the front door and rang the bell. Nothing happened. He put his thumb on the bell and kept it there.

After a long, long time, the door opened and a bulky, dark-suited

figure stood dimly outlined against the gloomy hallway.

In a thick Russian accent, the figure said, 'What do you want?'

'I should like to see Mr Vasili Mikoyan of the KGB,' said the Doctor.

'Name?'

'Smith. Dr John Smith.'

'Nature of business?'

'I have come to defect.'

The figure stared at him in amazement. 'What you say?'

'I am a British spy and I have come to defect.'

A portly, grey-haired man came hurrying down the staircase, brushing the burly minder aside.

'I an Vasili Mikoyan,' he said. 'Please, Doctor, a little discretion. Come inside.'

He took the Doctor's arm and drew him into the hallway.

The heavy door closed behind him.

Iosif Vissarionovich Dzhugashvili, commonly known by his revolutionary name of Stalin, the man of steel, was drunk.

There was nothing surprising in that. He was drunk every night. What was important to his companions, the handful of Politburo members who accom-panied him to the *dacha* every night, was what kind of drunk he was that evening.

Was he the jovial clownish drunk who liked to put a tomato on your chair when you rose to drink his health, or sprinkle salt in your wine when you weren't looking? Or even take you for a stroll in the garden and shove you into the pond with his massive bulk? That was fine, that was reassuring. As long as he was mocking you and humiliating you, he wasn't going to kill you.

Or was he the murderous paranoid drunk who might decide that *you* were the one plotting against him? Which meant death, or at best the labour camp for you, your family and most of your friends as well.

These days only a few favourites were invited to the *dacha*. They made an oddly-assorted group, all shapes and sizes. Malenkov was tall and fat, Kruschev was small and tubby. There was the stocky Bulganin, the lean and malevolent Beria, Head of the Secret Police – and the deposed former favourite, scrawny little Molotov, who wasn't actually invited but dared not stay away.

At the head of the table was the hunched, bear-like figure of Stalin, with the massive head, swept-back greying hair and great sweeping moustache.

They sat, as usual in the main room of the *dacha*. Stalin liked them to sit under their portraits, which lined the wall.

Every now and again a portrait disappeared. Voznesenky and Kuznetsov's pictures had vanished, which meant that the ministers concerned had vanished as well.

It was a time of silent, secret executions.

They sat around a long table carrying a luxurious buffet. There was caviar, salmon, cold cuts of every kind of meat, a variety of salads, every different kind of vodka. Each dish had a certificate beside it. 'No poisonous substances found.'

Stalin was in a cheerful, belligerent mood tonight. He mocked Molotov, calling him an American spy. He mocked them all.

'When I am gone, the imperialists will devour you like blind kittens,' he shouted. 'That is why I must deal with them now. It is a matter of them, or us!'

The ministers hammered their glasses on the table and cheered. They were all half-drunk. You had to drink when Stalin did or he might think you were guarding your tongue and had something to hide.

'You will lead us for many years to come,' shouted Kruschev.

'With you to lead us, victory is certain,' cried Bulganin.

'Hear, hear!' sobbed Molotov drunkenly.

'That is so,' cried Malenkov. 'And with you as our leader, the Imperialists will never dare to attack us!'

Only Beria dared to stay silent, a sneer on his thin lips.

‘You are wrong, all of you,’ roared Stalin. The Imperialists will attack, I tell you. They are planning it now. We must make it a matter of them or us. The thought has been growing in my mind. We must strike first.’

There was an appalled silence, and Stalin erupted in rage.

‘Get out, all of you, I am tired of you.’

Thankfully they scuttled from the room.

Stalin looked down the vacant table at the stained and littered tablecloth, the half-eaten dishes, the empty bottles and dirty glasses. He raised his voice in an angry bellow. ‘This place is a pigsty! Clean it up!’

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Four servants rushed into the room. Each grasped one corner of the tablecloth and made a bundle of its contents, plates, dishes, glasses, bottles, the lot, and carried it from the room amidst a crash of breaking glass.

Four more servants ran in with a snowy-white tablecloth and spread it over the table. More servants appeared with trays bearing caviar, salmon, cold meats, salads, and vodka. Each dish had its certificate of purity beside it. In minutes the banquet was recreated, as fresh and untouched as at the beginning of the evening.

The servants disappeared.

Stalin surveyed the restored table with gloomy satisfaction, and decided he wasn’t hungry. He wandered through the open French windows into the lamp-lit rose garden. He picked up a pair of shears and began cutting flowers with unsteady hands.

He wondered if she would come tonight.

Malenkov and Krushev shared a big Zis limousine back to Moscow. Of the inner group, the Praesidium, they were the only ones who were anything like friends. Not that they trusted each other, of course. They weren’t fools. But they didn’t actively hate each other either.

Krushev suppressed a yawn. ‘I wish Molotov would stop coming to

these affairs. It is hard to make merry in the presence of the living dead.'

Malenkov nodded ponderously, and looked at his watch. 'It is only 2 a.m.

We got off early tonight.'

'No doubt *she* is coming,' said Krushev.

'This increased belligerence. . . ' said Malenkov.

Krushev lowered his voice, wary of bugging devices. 'If we attack America now, we are finished. Later perhaps, five years hence, or ten. But now. . . the economy will not stand it.'

'In five years or ten the Boss may not be with us,' whispered Malenkov. 'He wants victory now, in his own time.'

Krushev said, 'That desire seems to have grown since his involvement with *her*. I believe she fosters it.'

'If that is so, someone should do something about her,' said Malenkov.

Krushev nodded. 'Perhaps someone will.' He paused. 'Perhaps something should also be done to reassure the Americans – before *they* strike first.'

Joseph Stalin put down his shears on a stone table and gathered a raggedly-cut bunch of roses in shaking hands.

He looked up in delight as a tall beautiful woman walked through the darkened rose garden towards him. She wore a red silk dress and a red shawl, and diamonds sparkled in her cloud of black hair.

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She looked, he thought like the women of the aristos, the girls he had hated and lusted after as a starving revolutionary. But that was just appearance, he told himself hurriedly. This was a true daughter of the revolution. She restored to him the power and the passion that had faded with the years.

He looked into the deep blue eyes that went so incongruously yet so wonderfully with her dark colouring, and held out the roses.

'For you I cut them myself.'

She took them from him and held them against her heart. 'Thank you.' She studied his sagging, heavily-lined face. 'You look weary, Joseph. Those fools around you have been tiring you again.'

'They do not understand my vision, as you do. When the lands of the Imperialists lie in smoking ruins they will see how wrong they were.'

Tucking the roses under one arm she touched his bull-like neck with one soft hand. 'You are tense, Joseph. Come with me and I will ease your pain.'

You shall tell me of all your wonderful plans.'

Taking his hand, she led him hack into the *dacha*.

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Chapter Twenty-five

Moscow

The route of the Doctor's defection to Moscow was exactly that followed by Guy Burgess and Donald Maclean a few days earlier.

Perhaps the Russians felt that what had worked once would surely work again. Perhaps it was an exceptionally cunning double-bluff. MI5 and Special Branch would never expect them to try the same thing twice, so they'd do just that.

Or perhaps it was the only escape route they had.

The Doctor was kitted out with a cheap suit and a cheap suitcase and a passport and papers proving that he was a French businessman returning home after a sales trip. He was given a ticket to St Malo via Southampton, and a pair of horn-rimmed glasses with plain-glass lenses, which he threw away as soon as he was alone.

He caught the eleven o'clock ferry without difficulty and enjoyed a quiet overnight crossing. No crazed assassins, no drunken spies.

He delayed over his breakfast until the boat was almost empty and went down the gangplank to find a taxi waiting at the quayside.

The taxi took him to Rennes, and from Rennes he caught a train to Paris where he was met by an anonymous courier. He was taken to a small hotel and given a change of clothes, appearance and identity.

Then he caught a train to Berlin, this time as a minor official of the Russian Zone occupation authorities. From Berlin he caught an Aeroflot plane to Moscow – a minor civil servant going home on leave.

Vasili Mikoyan stood behind Kim Philby in the queue for coffee. He had checked and double-checked that he had not been followed and that nobody was watching. He knew that Philby would have done the same.

‘He is on his way,’ he murmured quietly. It was a well-practiced routine, and Mikoyan knew that Philby could hear him even though there was no sign of acknowledgement.

‘Good,’ came the answering murmur. ‘No problems?’

‘None,’ Mikoyan confirmed. ‘But I do have a question.’

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‘Yes?’ Philby did not turn. The queue shuffled forwards a couple of paces towards the counter of the small cafe.

‘Why?’ Mikoyan asked. ‘What possible use is he? He seems so distracted, so bored with everything.’

Mikoyan could just hear Philby’s chuckle. ‘I know what you mean.’

‘So how can he help us?’

‘I have discovered,’ Philby murmured, ‘that it takes a good deal to get the Doctor motivated. But once he is, once he’s been wound up almost to breaking point, then there is no stopping him.’

Mikoyan grunted, not convinced. ‘We shall find out,’ he muttered.

‘Yes,’ Philby agreed. ‘Yes, I think we shall.’

When the Doctor got off the plane, a thin nervous-looking man came forward to greet him. ‘Dr Smith? I am Igor Timenko.’

‘And you know who I am!’ cried an all-too-familiar voice.

A portly figure in a fur hat and a fur coat bounded forward on a wave of vodka and gave the Doctor a bear-hug and a smacking kiss on the cheek.

‘I do indeed,’ said the Doctor, disengaging himself hurriedly. ‘Guy

Burgess.

Brigadier Brilliant in person!’

‘Welcome to Moscow, Doctor,’ said Burgess. ‘I always knew you were one of us at heart.’

The Doctor said nothing to disillusion him. If Burgess wanted to think he was a fellow defector, it was as good an explanation for his presence as any.

Burgess grabbed the Doctor’s arm and tried to drag him towards the airport buildings.

‘There must be a bar somewhere in this dump. Come and have a drink and tell me your news. How’s old Kim?’

‘Surviving,’ said the Doctor.

‘Please,’ said Timenko. ‘Better we talk and drink in the *dacha*.’ He led them towards a separate section of the airport buildings. ‘I am with the section of Russian Intelligence responsible for such persons as yourself and Mr Burgess,’

he explained. ‘Accommodation, employment and so on. Mr Burgess has use of a small *dacha*. For the moment you can share, it will be – convenient. Come, I must assist you through arrival formalities, and then I have a car. . . ’

Guy Burgess’s *dacha* was a modest place, in one of the inner suburbs of Moscow. Two bedrooms, a sitting room, kitchen – with a refrigerator well-stocked with vodka – and a small garden. The furniture was heavy and old fashioned, but comfortable enough.

At Guy’s insistence, the Doctor had a drink with him – or rather, one drink to Guy’s three – and gave him such news as he could. The Doctor satisfied 164

his curiosity by explaining how Philby had exposed him as the ‘third man’ in the Burgess/Maclean defection in order to save his own neck. Guy Burgess thought this was very amusing.

‘Keen sense of self-preservation, old Kim.’

The Doctor nodded. ‘He says the same thing about you!’

After dinner, Burgess pleaded a previous engagement and went off in

an official car provided by Timenko.

‘He has discovered certain bars frequented by those with similar tastes to his own,’ explained Timenko. ‘He is already busy making new friends. It is convenient – now we can talk freely. I am aware that you are not precisely a normal defector, Dr Smith.’

‘Which means, Mr Timenko, that you are not precisely a normal Russian security man.’

‘I am a loyal Soviet citizen, Doctor. But we Russians have had our fill of war. So, like Mr Philby, I am a member of a loose association of people in the intelligence world who wish at all costs to prevent atomic war.’

“‘Tightrope’?” the Doctor asked.

“‘Tightrope’. I understand that you share our concerns, Dr Smith.’

‘It would be truer to say I was forced to share them by Mr Philby. Equally, I concur with your aims.’

‘And you are here to help us deal with those we call Players? I gather you had some success in Washington.’

‘Limited success,’ said the Doctor. ‘But what I’m supposed to do here. . .’

‘Let me explain our current anxieties.’

Timenko told the Doctor of Stalin’s current condition.

‘He is dangerous enough at the best of times. But we believe he is being encouraged in this obsession with war by a certain Madame Razetskia. She calls herself a psychic healer and he has great faith in her. She visits him late at night in his *dacha* when his drinking cronies have left.’

‘I’d better see her,’ said the Doctor. ‘Though what good it will do. . .’

‘It will not be easy. She has a flat in Moscow, but she is seldom there.’

‘Then we must meet her at Stalin’s *dacha*. Can you get me in?’

Timenko considered. ‘I think so. I can bluff the guards with my security credentials; tell them we are carrying out a snap inspection. If we wait in the garden after the others have gone. . .’

‘Good,’ said the Doctor. ‘We’ll go tonight.’

The Doctor and Timenko waited in a shadowy corner of the rose garden of Stalin’s *dacha*. The gate guards had accepted Timenko’s claim that they were carrying out a spot security inspection and that nothing was to be said about their visit. Through the open French windows they had seen the drunken 165

revelry in the *dacha* and they had seen the revellers depart, heard their cars drive away.

Now they waited in the rose-scented darkness.

They saw the great bear-like figure of Stalin appear at the open French windows and stand gazing eagerly into the garden.

Then they saw the woman.

Tall and graceful, dressed in shimmering white silk, she floated across the rose garden like a ghost. Her long dark hair was tied up on her head, making her seem even taller and more elegant. A wisp had pulled free and danced in the breeze as she walked across the terrace. She glided up to the window and Stalin stretched out his hand and led her inside.

‘How did she get in?’ whispered Timenko. ‘There’s no entrance that way.’

The Doctor didn’t reply. Turning, Timenko saw that the Doctor was staring raptly at the open French windows. He began to move towards them.

Timenko pulled him back. ‘Don’t be a fool, you’ve seen her, now let’s go. If Stalin sees you spying on him you’ll be killed, I won’t be able to save you.’

The Doctor brushed him aside and moved towards the open window.

When he reached the window he stood for a moment, looking inside.

Stalin’s great bulk lay stretched out on a *chaise-longue*, with the woman in white kneeling by his head. She was stroking his broad forehead, and whispering in his ear. Her voice was low but the Doctor heard every word with unnatural clarity.

‘Your enemies are gathering,’ she whispered. Her voice had a musical

quality to it. It was strangely calming, despite what she was saying. 'The Americans, the Chinese. Their missiles are aimed at your cities, their armies massing at your frontiers. You must strike first, strike first, strike first!'

Without hesitating any longer, the Doctor stepped into the room. 'Stop it,'

he said in a low, horrified voice. 'Stop this madness at once.'

The woman swung round. The tone of her voice changed as her face clouded over darkly, her blue eyes hard as flint. 'How dare you –' She broke off, staring at the Doctor wide-eyed.

Stalin muttered and stirred and the woman made a quick pass over his eyes with the palm of her hand that returned him instantly to sleep. She turned and rose gracefully to her feet.

'Doctor? Doctor, it is you! Axel said you were back, but I didn't believe him.'

She studied him thoughtfully. 'Your shape has changed yet again – and again for the better. First the funny little clown, then that great handsome bull of a man. . . And now this! So young, so attractive.'

'I don't know you,' said the Doctor levelly.

She laughed. 'Of course you do. You knew me first as the Countess Malika Treszka. Then later as Countess Andrea Razetki. Here in this dreary Russia 166

there are no more Countesses so I am merely Madam Razetskia.'

The Doctor seemed to speak with great effort. 'What are you doing here?'

Her eyes widened innocently. 'Playing the Game, of course. You remember the Game, Doctor? The greatest Game of all? Whole nations as our chess-board.' She laughed again, but there was a hint of nervousness in it this time.

'Remember the expression on the Count's face when I shot him?' She shook her head as she remembered the moment. 'A mistake, of course. There was a terrible fuss about that but they forgave me eventually.'

'Don't tell me these things,' said the Doctor hoarsely 'I don't want to

know them. I'm past all that.'

'Have you come to play the game, Doctor? You defeated us last time, but this time we shall win. Oh, not with that peasant Truman, perhaps,' she added dismissively. 'But this old madman needs very little more to tip him over the edge.'

'You mustn't,' said the Doctor. 'An atomic war will destroy the planet, millions will die.'

'Only humans.' She seemed surprised – almost scandalised by his protest.

'We shall be safe. We are multi-dimensional beings,' she said with a shrug.

'We shall be. . . elsewhere.' Her lips pursed slightly as she added: 'And you have your magic box to whisk you away.'

'I have nothing,' said the Doctor. 'Whatever I was, I am no longer. I am stranded here. If the planet dies, I die with it. That old madman has only a few years to live.' His voice cracked slightly, and suddenly he was shouting:

'For pity's sake, calm him, and give this tormented world a chance of peace.'

He was breathing heavily as he struggled to control his emotions. 'That's the least it deserves,' he said more calmly.

'Deserves?' She looked at him quizzically. 'You make it sound as if we owe these humans something.'

'Like the chance to exercise their own free will?' the Doctor snapped back.

'The chance for a future without you snuffing it out like a spent candle.'

She laughed again, but with less humour this time. 'You would rather they destroyed themselves than we interfered and helped them on their way? They will get there eventually, Doctor. At least this way someone gets something out of it.'

'Amusement?' he asked. 'Your so-called Game?'

'Of course.'

‘You’ll forgive me if I don’t find the notion even remotely amusing, I hope,’

he said bitterly. ‘Any more than I find this Game of yours even remotely edify-ing.’

‘We are merely hastening the process of History, Doctor.’ She turned and gestured to the figure of Stalin, now sleeping peacefully. ‘As I said, Truman 167

is a different prospect. But this man, this leader of humanity, he will end the world soon enough. I can stretch out his paranoia, pander to his anxieties, –

and whisper confirmation of his suspicions right into the heart of his being.

But all I do is tell him what he already knows. ‘

She stepped back towards Stalin, and gently stroked her long fingers across his forehead. It was a gesture that was almost affectionate. ‘You really believe these humans deserve to live and exercise their own free will?’ she asked. ‘Look at him. Sleeping like a baby, isn’t that the phrase they use? This baby, Doctor – look at him closely.’ She continued to stroke his forehead as she spoke. ‘This baby, this leader of perhaps the most powerful people on the planet. . . Do you know how many he has killed? How many have died because of him? Forget Hitler,’ she said dismissively, ‘he was in a different league. He only killed a few million and most of those were from other races or nations.’

She stepped back, as if admiring her protégé as he slept. ‘But this man has slaughtered many times that number of his own countrymen. Let alone the slaughter of the Second World War.’ She gave a short laugh. ‘Do you know,’

she said, as if recounting an amusing anecdote or passing on some gossip,

‘what music he listens to? What records he plays for the entertainment of his evening guests?’ Her eyes flashed. ‘Not even going to guess, Doctor? Then let me tell you. He listens to records of dogs barking. Howling. Mad dogs.’

She turned back towards Stalin, a faint smile on her lips. ‘And you argue that this. . . monster deserves to live.’

‘I don’t believe I argued anything of the kind,’ the Doctor said, suppressing his anger. ‘I asked you not to interfere. I asked that you leave humanity to its own devices and decisions – good and bad. If we can’t be allowed to take our own decisions, we can hardly be responsible for our actions. Who knows how he would behave if you weren’t manipulating him. Give him the chance to make his own decisions, to go his own way through this deadly, dreadful maze.’

‘You speak as if you were yourself human, Doctor.’

‘You call yourselves Players,’ the Doctor said. ‘Yet you have no appreciation of the playing pieces themselves. No understanding of the suffering and the heartache and the sorrow and the pain that is inflicted for your amusement.’

The woman’s eyes seemed to shine as she stared back at him. ‘You lump us all together and assume that because some of us don’t care, none of us do,’

she said.

‘Just as you lump all of humanity together and assume that this sad old madman is in some way indicative of Mankind as a whole, you mean?’ The Doctor laughed now, though there was precious little humour in the sound.

‘You know, I wonder who is deceiving whom.’

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‘Oh come, Doctor,’ she replied. ‘You know me well enough to appreciate what I really think. I don’t have the impulsive contempt for Mankind that Axel does, or the complete lack of scruples and feeling that Myrek and Helga are so keen to foster.’ She smiled. ‘I still believe this world has enormous potential.’

The Doctor looked at her askance. ‘You do?’ He seemed unconvinced.

‘I was out-voted,’ she said simply. ‘There are so many more games we could play on such a rich board.’

‘Ah.’ The anger was back in the Doctor’s voice now. ‘So by potential, you don’t mean the potential of the human race. You don’t mean the great things they can achieve. You don’t think of how they feel, how they cry, how they fall in love, how they exchange words in the street or watch the sunset. You don’t care about the beauty they see and

sense and smell in life. Can't you imagine, just for a moment. . . ' He was staring off into the distance as he spoke, as if imagining it – or trying to imagine it – himself. 'Can't you imagine the joy of holding a new-born child? The shock of a cold shower? The wonder of a rainstorm on a sunny day? Can't you feel the loss of a lover's departure? The fading memory of a stolen kiss? The way the ice cream in summer melts just faster than you can eat it?' His voice was almost a whisper now. 'Can you *feel* nothing?'

He shook his head, bitter and angry 'You only care about the games you can play with them. How to use them for your sport.' He pursed his lips tightly before adding: 'How very selfish you must be. How very sad.'

She stared intently at him. She frowned, and said slowly: 'There's something wrong with you, isn't there. You try to deny it, even to yourself, but there is something. . . missing.' She seemed genuinely concerned. 'You talk of the wonder of life on this planet, but something of the spark in you has gone.'

The wonder, the excitement, the sheer joy of living used to come off you in waves.' She took a step towards him as she spoke. 'I can sense it. Your mind is shrouded.' She moved closer still, reaching out a hand towards him. 'I can help you, Doctor,' she said quietly. 'Let me clear your mind. Let me restore your memory. Make you whole again.'

'No!' screamed the Doctor suddenly as she approached.

She leaped back, astounded at the strength of his reaction. It was as if she had struck him hard across the face.

'Leave me alone,' the Doctor sobbed. 'I mustn't know! *I mustn't know!* '

He collapsed, sobbing, to his knees, his arms wrapped protectively around his head as if to shut out the entire world.

She took a pace towards him and then stopped as she saw Timenko standing at the French windows.

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In a low fierce whisper she said, 'Are you his friend? Did you bring him here?'

Timenko nodded.

‘He is. . . unwell.’ She stepped towards the Doctor, pausing over him as he continued to kneel on the floor, his hands over his ears. Then she gently lifted one of his hands away from his head, and raised it to her lips. She kissed the back of his hand, then pressed it gently to her cheek before she let it go.

The Doctor looked up at her for a moment, sadness, surprise and perplexity all mixed on his face. Then he pressed the hand over his ear again, and looked away.

‘Take him away before they find him and kill him,’ she said.

Timenko raised the Doctor to his feet and led him towards the French windows.

‘Wait,’ she said. ‘When he recovers. . . ’ She turned away, so that Timenko could not see the way her blue eyes glistened. ‘Tell him. . . Tell him that I will do as he asks. For his sake. For the sake of the fading memory of a stolen kiss.’

Timenko nodded, and led the Doctor into the garden.

The woman watched them disappear into the darkness.

Then she knelt beside the still sleeping Stalin, gently stroking his forehead.

‘Sleep, mighty one. Sleep,’ she whispered. ‘Your battles are all fought and won, your enemies fear you too much to attack.’ She paused to wipe the moisture from her eye. ‘Ignore them,’ she said. ‘They do not matter. They are not worth your attention. Relax and enjoy your victories, the love of your people. . . ’

In his sleep, Stalin smiled.

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Chapter Twenty-six

Showdown

‘She said to tell you that she would do as you asked,’ said Timenko.

The Doctor nodded. ‘We must hope and pray that she keeps her word.’

They were having a late breakfast of coffee and rolls in the little *dacha*.

Guy Burgess had only just returned and was still asleep – which seemed to indicate, said Timenko, that last night's quest for friendship had not gone unfulfilled.

After a moment Timenko said hesitantly, 'The lady appeared to know you.'

'She claimed to, yes.'

'But you do not remember? It is hard to imagine forgetting such a beautiful lady,' said Timenko.

'She belongs to a part of my life which is buried,' said the Doctor.

'You do not wish to see her again?'

'I don't think I could bear it,' said the Doctor simply. 'I should like to leave Moscow as quickly as possible.'

'So soon?'

'I accomplished Kim Philby's main purpose simply by coming here. And the little I can do about the Players, I did last night. There's no point in staying on.'

Timenko considered. 'There is one possibility. I do not know if you would care for it.'

'Try me.'

'A Trade Delegation leaves for Washington tomorrow. There is always a large entourage with such expeditions, clerks, interpreters, security men. At a pinch, I could get you papers and a passport so that you could join them.'

'Washington,' said the Doctor thoughtfully. 'Why not? I'm not sure if it's safe for me to go back to London yet. And there's still some unfinished business with the Players there.'

'I shall go to my office and make the necessary arrangements,' said Timenko.

'And tonight you and Guy must have dinner with me. I shall send a car. You shall see at least something of our beautiful Moscow.'

They dined that night in a barn of a restaurant with surly service, poor food, and a smell of cabbage.

‘One of our finest,’ said Timenko proudly. ‘The vodka is excellent!’

The vodka seemed to be the main feature of the cuisine, with most customers more interested in drinking than eating.

‘With this kind of food,’ said Burgess, ‘it’s understandable. You have to be drunk to tolerate it.’

‘I should be careful, Mr Burgess,’ warned Timenko. He pointed to a large lady wearing overalls who sat by the door. At her feet was a bucket of liquid in which floated a sponge.

‘What’s in the bucket?’ asked Burgess.

‘Ammonia.’

‘What for?’

‘Watch!’

Suddenly a nearby diner, overcome by vodka, fell forward face downward on the table. The large lady leaped up, dipped her sponge in her bucket and dashed over with it. She pulled the drunk’s head up by the hair and thrust the ammonia-soaked sponge up his nose. The drunk leaped to his feet with a scream, and the sponge-lady grabbed him from behind, turned him round, ran him over to the door and hurled him into the night.

Burgess shuddered. ‘I think I’ll do my serious drinking at home.’

After dinner they drove past the Kremlin and Lenin’s tomb, both illuminated.

Burgess asked to be dropped off at a new back street club he’d discovered, and the Doctor and Timenko went home to sleep.

Burgess returned in time to see the Doctor off at the airport, shaking his hand fervently and wishing him luck on his new mission. He seemed convinced that the Doctor, having escaped from London at the last possible moment, was now off on an even more daring espionage assignment to Washington.

The Doctor didn’t disillusion him. He looked at the tubby, fur-hatted figure with a certain affection.

‘Well, goodbye, Brigadier,’ he said.

‘Goodbye, Doctor.’ Burgess saluted smartly, turned and marched off, presumably in the direction of the nearest bar.

Pausing only to thrust a bundle of dollars into the Doctor’s hands – ‘Secret funds, nobody dares to ask questions’ – Timenko hurried after him.

The Doctor endured a long and noisy flight in the company of several dozen joyous Russian civil servants celebrating their journey from the workers’ paradise to the centre of evil capitalism. There was no drinks trolley but it didn’t matter. They’d all brought their own vodka.

On arrival in Washington, the Doctor destroyed and ditched his Russian papers and substituted American ones, also provided by Timenko. Then he 172

took a taxi to the White House.

He persuaded a sceptical receptionist to call Kent Howard’s office and soon the naval aide came down to greet him, looking more handsome than ever in a well-cut suit. He took the Doctor up to his office and sent for coffee and sandwiches, which were brought by the usual adoring girl.

‘Great to see you again, Doctor,’ he said. ‘How have you been? Where’ve you been?’

‘Here and there,’ said the Doctor. ‘All over, really.’

‘There was a rumour your friend Kim was in trouble back in London,’ said Howard casually. ‘He seems to have survived it though.’

‘Yes, he’s a great survivor.’ said the Doctor grimly. ‘How’s the President? Did you convince him about the dangers of *Project Kali*?’

‘I’m not sure,’ said Howard. ‘I wrote a full report and left it in his priority in-tray. He only got back from the peace talks last night, so I’m not sure if he’s read it yet.’ He put down his coffee cup and picked up the phone. ‘Tell you what, I’ll call the Oval Office and check.’ He picked up an internal phone and dialled. ‘Jeannie? Kent Howard here. . . I’m fine. Do you know if the boss has read that report I left for him? That’s right, the one about *Project Kali*.’ He listened for a moment, an expression of mounting horror on his face. ‘He did what? When? Hell! OK, I’ll handle it.’ He slammed down the phone. ‘Seems the President

got to my report a couple of hours ago. When he read it he blew his top. He yelled something like, "Either Kent Howard's gone crazy or those guys are crooks and I'm gonna find out which!" Then he ordered his car and told Jeannie he was going to sort out this *Project Kali* business once and for all!

'Did he go alone?'

'The President doesn't go anywhere alone. He'll have a couple of Secret Service guys with him, and the driver.'

'It's not enough,' said the Doctor instantly 'These people are completely ruthless. They'll kill the guards and brainwash the President. If we don't get him out of there soon, he'll come back a different man and start firing off atomic missiles like firecrackers. We've got to go after him.'

Howard grabbed the phone again. 'Jim, this is Kent. Listen, we have a major crisis involving the President's safety. Yes I know he's got two of your guys with him, but they won't be enough. Grab all the men you can and meet me in the parking lot.'

Ten minutes later, two cars filled with armed Secret Service men were speeding towards the *Project Kali* compound.

Jim Anderson, Kent Howard and the Doctor were all in the first car.

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'That ornery little sonovabitch is running straight into danger,' said Howard.

'Why the hell didn't your guys stop him, Jim?'

'Not their job. They escort the President wherever he wants to go, they don't pick his destinations.'

'Don't forget, as far as anyone knows this is an official CIA project,' the Doctor pointed out. 'One the President has visited before. Jim's men aren't to blame.'

'No, I am,' said Howard bitterly. 'I should've been right there in his office when he read my report.'

'No point in blaming ourselves or each other,' said the Doctor. 'We just have to hope we're in time.'

When the old house came in sight Anderson said, 'Now remember, those guards are US Marines, and as far as they're concerned they're just doing their job. So, no shooting if you can possibly avoid it. If you do have to get tough, then use your fists.'

The cars drew up outside the gate and a guard appeared from the hut.

Anderson produced his Secret Service credentials. 'Bodyguards for the President, open up.'

'He's got two in there already.'

'Well he needs more,' yelled Anderson. 'Open up that gate!'

The guard opened the gate and the Secret Service men poured through.

A sergeant appeared from the hut, followed by several more guards.

'What the hell do you guys think you're doing, barging in here?'

A promising brawl developed, with lots of shoving and yelling. The Doctor detached himself from the melee and sprinted for the long hut. When he reached it the sentry moved to bar his way.

'What's going on over there?'

'Trouble at the gate,' shouted the Doctor. 'Your friends need help.'

The guard set off at a run. The Doctor opened the door and stepped inside the hut. At first, everything looked exactly the same as on his first visit.

The big hall, divided into different sections.

The rows of couches along each side of the main area.

Each couch occupied by a man or woman, heads connected by suction pads to the tangle of electronic equipment at the side of each couch.

White-coated assistants patrolling between the couches.

Only one thing was different.

On the couch at the far end, the one where the grey-haired man had died, there was now a different figure. A small stocky figure, writhing against the restraining straps that held him to the couch. Like the

others, his head was wired up to the electronics.

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It was Harry Truman, President of the United States.

Three figures were grouped around the couch: Myrek, Helga and the taller form of Axel. They were so absorbed in their task that at first they didn't see the Doctor approach.

Myrek was whispering enthusiastically into the microphone. 'The Russians can't be trusted. They can never be trusted. And their technology is rapidly overtaking yours. Strike now before they became too powerful.'

Truman writhed on the couch, straining against the restraining straps. His face twisted into an angry scowl.

Myrek straightened up. 'He is obstinate, obstinate! He is angry and that strengthens the resistance.'

'I could increase the frequency,' suggested Helga. 'That might break through the mental barriers.'

'It might also kill him, or drive him mad,' said Myrek gloomily. 'Still, I suppose we must try.'

As Helga moved towards the apparatus, the Doctor shouted, 'Stop that!'

The authority in his voice stopped her where she stood.

The three figures around the couch stared at the Doctor.

'It's too late,' he told them. 'The US Cavalry's here, just outside. It's over.'

Myrek looked terrified and Helga was impassive.

Axel smiled. Suddenly there was a gun in his left hand, a knife in his right.

'It is never over for us, Doctor.' His voice was cold and dangerous. 'But it is certainly over for you.' He handed the gun to Myrek, who held it clumsily.

'If he moves, shoot him. But don't shoot to kill.' He took a step

towards the Doctor. 'I want to cut his throat, to feel his blood on my hands. He's tried to humiliate me. He presumed he's a match for me.'

Savouring the moment, Axel stalked forward.

The Doctor scarcely noticed. He was looking at the tall black-haired blue-eyed woman who now stood behind the others at the rear of the hall.

She smiled at him. And, for the briefest of moments, he smiled back.

Then the knife was flying from Axel's hand, curving through the air. But its target was not the Doctor. Axel's face was a mask of surprise and fear as the blade thudded into Helga's heart. She staggered back, gasping, and fell heavily to the floor.

At almost the same instant, the gun in Myrek's hand jerked up. The trigger bucked away beneath his finger and a shot rang out. The sound was amplified in the enclosed space, echoing off the walls. As the echoes were still fading, a red blotch appeared between Axel's astonished eyes.

The fear and surprise still fixed on his waxen face, Axel collapsed into a tangle of equipment.

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Myrek recovered enough to raise the gun. He tried to take aim at the Doctor, but it would not point where he wanted it to. He stared down in horror as it rose up until the barrel was jammed under his chin. His trigger finger tightened of its own accord. He fired the gun and died, crumpling to the ground.

The Doctor looked at the three bodies. 'Are they really dead?' he wondered quietly.

'Oh yes. When we take human form we can die. Without true hazard the game is pointless.' There was sadness in her voice, but resignation as well.

'Why kill them?' the Doctor asked in surprise. 'Why help me?'

'They bored me. You intrigue me. You said some things that struck a chord somewhere inside me. And I confess, I find this world more interesting with you in it. She was smiling again now. 'We shall meet again, Doctor. When you are more yourself.'

She was gone.

Having finally convinced the Marine guards that they were the good guys, Howard and Anderson came bursting into the hut. Howard looked round, saw the President and ran to release him. The minute he was free of the straps and electrodes, Truman sat up on the couch, scowling furiously.

‘Goddammit, Kent, you told me these guys were no good. Why didn’t I listen?’

‘I guess it’s because you’re from Missouri, Mr President,’ Kent replied with a grim smile. ‘You just had to make them show you.’

He led the President outside to the waiting car.

Jim Anderson looked at the three dead bodies. ‘What happened to these guys, Dr Smith?’

‘I told them the game was up and they started fighting amongst themselves.

It was all very sudden.’

Anderson gave him a sceptical look. ‘If that’s your story, I guess nobody’s gonna argue.’ He started fishing in his pockets. ‘I’ve got a message for you somewhere, from Kim Philby. It came yesterday. With all this hoo-haw I’ve had no chance to give it to you.’

He found a crumpled slip of paper in his back pocket and passed it over.

The message read: ‘Come home at once, all is forgiven. Imminent blue box delivery assured.’

‘I guess it’s in code,’ said Anderson.

‘You might say that.’ The Doctor tucked the paper inside his jacket pocket.

‘The real point is, is it true?’

The Doctor returned to England in considerable style. He flew, First Class, of course, in an American plane. He was wearing an expensive suit, and carrying an expensive travelling case packed with expensive accessories. In his pocket he had an equally expensive wallet stuffed with American dollars and English pounds. It also held a bank draft for an enormous sum for 'consultancy services.' He had a British diplomatic passport, issued by the British Embassy as a personal favour to the President.

All this was as nothing compared to what he could have had if he'd stayed in America. American citizenship, a high-paid job as a White House aide, almost anything he cared to ask.

When he had learned of the Doctor's role in the exposing of *Project Kali* and affecting his own rescue, the President had been almost excessively grateful.

But Philby's message had made the Doctor want to come home.

When he arrived at Heathrow, Kim Philby was waiting to meet him.

As the taxi bore them back to London, Philby said, 'I assure you, you have nothing to worry about, Doctor. Your file has vanished from the records of MI5

and MI6. Even your considerable criminal record has now been expunged.

You cleared me, and now I have been able to clear you.'

'The difference is,' said the Doctor, 'that my clearing you was quite involuntary. You shopped me.'

'What choice did I have?

The authorities needed a third man in the

Burgess/Maclean defection and I had to give them one. And look at the benefits. You dealt with the Players in Moscow, cleared up their operation in Washington, and won the undying gratitude of the President. None of this would have happened without me.'

'I suppose I ought to thank you.'

'I really think you ought,' said Philby gravely. 'And there's something else.

When we first met, you were remote, detached. You've come alive a little since then.'

'Have I?'

'Just a little. There's a long way to go but it's a start.'

'Perhaps I don't want to "come alive".'

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'Of course you do. You'll thank me someday.'

The Doctor sighed. 'Perhaps. But don't do me any more favours, I don't think I could bear it.'

'One last favour, Doctor,' said Kim Philby. 'Soon after you get home a plain van will arrive. It will contain, not policemen, but a certain blue box.' He took a buff envelope from his briefcase. 'Here are your possessions from the police station, including, presumably, your key.' He indicated a holdall on the floor.

'This is yours as well.' He looked out of the window. 'Won't be long now.'

There was a moment of silence.

'Are you really in the clear?' asked the Doctor.

Philby smiled. 'For a time. The suspicion will never really go away. But suspicion isn't proof.'

Soon they were pulling up outside the Doctor's basement flat.

'Well, goodbye, Doctor.' Philby held out his hand.

After a moment's hesitation the Doctor took it. 'Goodbye.'

Clutching his possessions, he climbed out of the taxi, and watched it drive away. He stood on the pavement for a moment, then he went down the steps.

Fishing out the key from the buff envelope, he let himself in.

Another festive evening at Stalin's *dacha*. The same luxurious cold buffet, the same array of vodka bottles. The French windows stood open to the spring night, the heady scent of roses drifted in from the

garden, competing with the fumes of Stalin's pipe, and the harsh reek of Russian cigarettes.

The same handful of half-drunk and desperately frightened men were sitting at the long table. Tall, plump Malenkov, tubby little Krushchev, stocky Bulganin, skeleton-thin Beria with his death's-head grin. Even scrawny little Molotov was there, surviving one more night to be the butt of Stalin's mockery.

Molotov apart, the four Politburo members were amongst the most powerful men in Russia. But they had good reason to be afraid. There at the head of the table sat Stalin, supreme ruler of Russia, hunched bear-like over his vodka glass. Every man at the table remembered the purges during the war when he had executed more of his Army officers for treason than the Germans were killing on the battlefield. Now, six years later, things were little better. There were still purges. Politburo members accused of plotting against him, doctors accused of trying to kill him, KGB men accused of being double-agents – nobody was safe. To be suspected was to be condemned, most likely to death.

A bullet in the back of the neck in some KGB dungeon. Or, if Stalin was feeling merciful, exile to the labour camps of the Gulag Archipelago. That was a death sentence too. It just took you longer to die.

For some time, Stalin had been sitting in moody silence. He seemed distracted, almost in a trance. His nervous guests talked in low voices, wondering 178

when the storm would break.

Stalin took the pipe from his mouth, drained his vodka glass, swept the back of his hand across his moustache and bellowed, 'Blind kittens! Blind kittens, the lot of you!'

It was his favourite form of abuse. Usually it was followed by a warning that once he was gone the ravening wolves of the imperialist West would descend on Russia and devour them all.

They braced themselves for the usual diatribe. But tonight was to be very different.

'Weaklings! Timid fools!' he began in his usual style. 'You fear the Western capitalists will attack you. You are terrified that American tanks will roll into Moscow.'

‘And rightly so,’ said Kruschew solemnly. ‘As you yourself have so often warned us, the imperialist hyenas are always waiting to pounce –’

‘Idiot!’ roared Stalin. ‘There is no danger. There is nothing to fear!’

His audience stared at him in astonished silence.

‘The imperialists will never dare to attack us,’ he went on. ‘Half of Europe is in ruins, the rest is under our hand. The British are crippled by war-debts, a spent force. Both British and Americans are locked in a struggle with the Chinese in Korea, a war they can never win. They will get a bloody nose and then sue for a truce. That will give them a distaste for war. They will never dare to attack us.’

Astonishingly Bulganin, considerably more drunk than the others, dared to disagree.

‘They were ready enough to attack us in ’45,’ he growled. ‘Didn’t their General Patton want to keep his tanks rolling until they reached Moscow?’

‘Patton was mad,’ said Stalin dismissively. ‘Even the Americans knew that.’

‘Very true,’ said Beria owlishly. ‘They were most relieved when he died in that car accident. Some of my KGB people think the Americans killed him themselves, before he could start a third world war.’

‘They might have dared to dream of attacking us once,’ said Stalin. ‘After Hiroshima and Nagasaki. But that was when they had the bomb, and we did not. For a brief time it is true, we were vulnerable. But now, thanks to the efforts of our Soviet scientists –’

‘And our Soviet spies,’ interjected Beria.

Amazingly Stalin tolerated the interruption. ‘And indeed, to our Soviet spies, we too have the atom bomb. So you see, they will never attack us now, we are too strong. Relax, my friends, there is nothing to fear!’ He swung round on Bulganin. ‘As for you, my friend, not so much gloom and doom, or I’ll start to think you’re an American spy like poor old Molotov here.’

Molotov giggled ingratiatingly, relieved to hear the familiar joke.

Somewhere inside he knew that when Stalin tired of the joke he would decide it was the truth and execute him.

‘As always, our leader guides us on the correct path,’ said Beria. ‘While the Imperialist swine can never really be trusted, and must be vigilantly watched, at present they are too weak to attack us.’

Stalin nodded benignly and Krushev and Malenkov exchanged quick glances. It was time to jump on the new bandwagon.

‘That is undoubtedly so,’ said Malenkov in his ponderous way. ‘And to whom do we owe the strength that brings us this safety? To our glorious leader, Joseph Stalin!’

Krushev jumped to his feet, raising his glass. ‘To Stalin!’ he shouted.

Everyone joined him in the toast. ‘To Stalin!’

Stalin sat back, regarding them benignly. ‘Thank you, my children. Now, it is time for you to leave. I know how arduous are your duties in the Politburo, and you need your rest.’

In an awed silence they tiptoed from the room.

In the car going back to Moscow, Krushev said quietly, ‘Dementia, do you think?’

Malenkov shrugged. ‘Perhaps. He’s over seventy years old, and he’s been drunk for most of them. Maybe the vodka’s finally rotted his brain.’

‘Let’s hope this state of delusion lasts for a while,’ said Krushev. ‘It’s considerably safer than the previous one. I’m all in favour of burying our Western opponents. But not yet, not yet. . . ’

The black limousine sped towards Moscow.

Alone at the end of the long table, Stalin poured himself another glass of vodka, drained it, and sat back in a benevolent alcoholic haze. Why had it taken him so long to realise that the struggle was over, the battle won? Now it was time to sit back, to enjoy the rewards of victory.

A wonderful feeling of peace and contentment swept over him. He looked up and saw the tall beautiful woman with dark hair and blue eyes smiling at him from the open French windows. Once again she

was dressed all in white, like one of God's holy angels – which was nonsense, he told himself hurriedly.

God and His angels had been officially abolished in Russia for many years. All the same he felt an almost religious sense of awe.

He lurched to his feet and bowed clumsily. 'Madame Razetskia!'

He pushed back his chair and came towards her, holding out shaking hands in welcome.

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She took them in hers and led him towards the *chaise-longue*.

'You are better tonight, Joseph, but you are still weary. You are too unselfish, you work too hard. Let others bear the burden now.'

'Those idiots around me exhaust me with their fears,' grumbled Stalin. He stretched out on the *chaise-longue* which creaked beneath his weight. 'I tell them there is no need to worry, that the danger is past, but still they whine and nag.'

She knelt beside him, sweeping long cool fingers over his forehead. 'Rest, and let me heal you.'

As always, the touch of her hand sent him into a light trance.

Madame Razetskia, sometimes known as the Countess, supreme Player of the Game, knelt gracefully beside him, stroking his forehead. She whispered to him of his greatness and his power, telling him there was nothing to fear, that no-one would dare to attack him.

But her true thoughts were far away from the aging dictator. In her mind she saw a tall, handsome young man with a tormented face and black, unutterable horror in his soul. . .

The flat was dark and musty, but, as before, curiously comforting. The Doctor was sitting quietly, absorbing the atmosphere when he heard the van draw up in the street outside. He went to the door and climbed up the steps.

The back door opened and an overalled man leaped out clutching a clipboard and pencil.

'Dr Smith. Sign here, please.'

The Doctor signed for, 'One box, blue.'

Six very large young men, all wearing overalls, jumped out of the van, lowered a ramp and slid out, 'One box, blue.' Moving with military precision, they lifted it efficiently between them and manoeuvred it down the basement steps, into the kitchen and down the stairs to the cellar. The practiced skill with which they handled the box and the fact that they knew exactly where it was supposed to go, strongly suggested they were the ones who had removed it in the first place.

They placed the box precisely in the right spot, clattered up the steps, jumped into their van and drove away.

The Doctor stood looking at the box for a long time. He leaned forward, placing his palms on it. After a few moments he sighed and moved away. He went up the stairs into the kitchen, then into the living room.

The holdall Philby had given him was standing in the middle of the floor.

He carried it into the bedroom and tipped it out onto the bed. It contained the comfortable old clothes, the corduroy suit and soft shirt he had left behind 181

in his escape from the clinic. The clothes had all been neatly cleaned and pressed.

The Doctor took off his smart American suit and put them on. He transferred things to his pockets and then went out of the flat. It was a fine, sunny afternoon. He strolled along the Bloomsbury streets at random, and found that his feet had taken him to the *Café des Artistes*.

He went over to his usual table and sat down. Penny came bustling over.

Never one to avoid the obvious, she cried, 'Doctor, you're back!'

He smiled at her. 'Yes Penny, I'm back. Coffee and cheesecake, please.'

She went back to the counter and said, 'Muriel, look, the Doctor's back.'

Muriel sniffed.

'Haven't seen you for ages,' said Penny when she came back with his

order.

‘Where’ve you been?’

‘Oh, here and there. All over, really.’

‘And you’ve cut your hair! I really liked it long.’

‘It will grow again.’

‘Hear about poor old Oskar?’

‘Yes, I heard.’

‘Terrible, wasn’t it?’

‘Yes,’ said the Doctor. ‘Terrible.’

He sat for a long time over his coffee and cheesecake. He had forgotten how bitter the coffee tasted, how sweet the cheesecake was on his tongue. It really was quite enjoyable.

Then he got up and carried his bill over to the counter to pay it. He put down half a crown.

‘Thank you, Doctor.’

‘You look very nice today, Penny,’ he said, before he wandered off towards the door.

‘Well!’ said Muriel.

Penny blushed bright pink. ‘See!’ she said.

The Doctor strolled along the pavement and paused by the paper seller.

He fished out his penny. ‘Evening News, please.’

The old man gave him his paper. The Doctor glanced at the headline.

‘KOREA – NEW HOPE FOR TRUCE’

He rolled up the paper and put it in his jacket pocket.

The Doctor looked at the old newsvendor and suddenly *saw* him. Saw the beaky Mr Punch nose, the bright old eyes, the spotless white muffler and the grimy old cloth cap.

‘Nice afternoon,’ said the Doctor, and smiled.

It was so unexpected that the old man jumped.

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Then he smiled back, and said, ‘Certainly is, guy, very nice afternoon. Time we had some nice weather. We deserve it.’

‘Yes,’ said the Doctor with determination. ‘Yes, we do!’

He wandered on his way.

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Envoi

‘The Endgame has failed. It must be declared void.’ The female voice was cool, relaxed, even amused.

The cold voice of the Adjudicator was not. ‘Why?’

‘To begin with, I failed with the Russian leader. He is old and feeble and soon he will die. His battles are all in the past. He will fight no more.’

‘And the others? Axel, Myrek, Helga?’

‘Dead. All dead.’

‘How did this happen?’

‘Their methods were clumsy, crude and violent. They allowed the hand of the Player to be seen. They kidnapped the American president, and his bodyguard followed and killed them.’

‘You were there? You saw this happen?’

‘I was there, but I arrived too late to help. Now there is nobody left to play.’

‘And our old enemy, the Doctor?’

‘He was there, helping the humans.’

‘Did you destroy him?’

‘No.’

‘Why not?’

'He was changed, diminished, not worth the killing. When he has recovered, he will be a worthy opponent once more.'

A pause.

'You have told me the entire truth, Countess?'

'Would I dare to lie, Adjudicator?'

'Very well. Since there is no one alive to contradict you, I accept your story.'

'The Endgame is void.'

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Historical Afterword

Spies in Exile

Maclean

Donald Maclean tackled life as an exile with the same hardworking serious-ness that had made him a success in the Foreign Office. He worked hard to learn Russian – the only one of the three to do so – and carved out a respectable career in the Russian Foreign Affairs Ministry.

In 1953, his American wife Melinda came to join him in Russia.

Ten years later she ran off with Kim Philby, by now a fellow exile.

After thirty-two years as an exile, Donald Maclean died in March 1983.

Burgess

Guy Burgess didn't allow a little detail like Russian exile to affect his way of life. He was Brigadier Brilliant to the end, drinking enormous amounts of vodka, and pursuing handsome young men.

Showing more than a touch of his old form, he once got blind drunk at a party in the Chinese Embassy in Moscow, and peed in the marble fireplace.

The Chinese were furious and so was Donald Maclean.

On the other hand, Guy greatly impressed his Russian hosts by correctly forecasting that Harold Macmillan, not Rab Butler, would become England's prime minister. He was rewarded with a chauffeur-driven car and a *dacha* outside Moscow.

Guy Burgess ended his days in a comfortable flat in Moscow, living with a handsome young electrician and an Alsatian dog, both called Tolya.

He died of drink in August 1963, leaving behind a few good suits and shirts, and a drawer filled with Old Etonian bow ties.

Philby

The British security services never quite caught up with Kim Philby. The old fox eluded them to the very end.

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In 1951, not long after the Burgess/Maclean defection, he was recalled to London under suspicion of being the 'third man' who had tipped them off and helped to arrange their escape.

He was interrogated by Dick White, one of MI5's most experienced interrogators. Philby continued to maintain his complete innocence, and White got nothing out of him. White ended the interrogation convinced of Philby's guilt. But there was no proof, and Philby wouldn't crack.

Nevertheless, he was asked to resign from the service. He was given a £4000 payoff, good money in days when £20 a week was a decent salary.

Even after leaving the service, he was repeatedly questioned by Milmo and Skardon, MI5's top interrogators. They had no more luck than Dick White.

Over the next few years, Philby earned a living as a part-time journalist and businessman. In 1955, Foreign Minister Harold Macmillan officially proclaimed Philby's innocence.

Philby held a celebratory press conference.

By 1956 he was in Beirut, acting as a foreign correspondent for the *Observer* and *Financial Times*. There are rumours that the job was

arranged by friends in MI6. There were also rumours that he was working for the secret service again. Had they forgiven him? Or was he, as the Russians suspected for a time, not a double but a triple agent?

By January 1963, evidence of Philby's guilt was piling up from a series of Russian defectors. An MI5 agent was sent to Beirut to offer him immunity in return for a full confession. Philby kept MI5 quiet with a worthless two-page partial confession. On January 23rd he disappeared. Four days later he was in Russia.

He spent the rest of his life as an exile. Less repressed and neurotic than Maclean, not so debauched and eccentric as Burgess, he adjusted well. He was given Soviet citizenship and a pension. He advised the Russian Government, gave lectures to the KGB and even wrote his memoirs – *My Secret War*.

Philby's second wife, Eleanor, joined him in Russia in September 1963, not long after his defection. In 1964 she went back to America for a visit. Philby began an affair with Melinda, the wife of Donald Maclean. It lasted for five years and then they broke up.

In 1971 he married a Russian girl, Rufina. They remained happily married until his death in 1988.

Was he a traitor, the most successful double agent of all time? Or was he, after all, the supreme triple, loyal to the England he undoubtedly loved?

We shall never know. Kim Philby kept his secrets to the end.

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About the Author

Terrance Dicks joined *Doctor Who* as junior assistant trainee script editor in 1968 when they were making *The Web of Fear*, and desperately trying to make a roaring Yeti sound less like a flushing lavatory. He worked on the show during the end of the Patrick Troughton years, and co-wrote *The War Games*, Troughton's last show, with Malcolm Hulke. He stayed on as script editor for the whole of the Jon Pertwee period and left to write *Robot*, the first Tom Baker story. (This was in accordance with an ancient *Who* tradition, which he'd just invented, that the departing script editor writes the first show of the next season.)

In the years that followed he wrote a handful of *Doctor Who* scripts, finishing in 1983 with *The Five Doctors*, the programme's twentieth anniversary special.

In the early seventies he was in at the beginning of the *Doctor Who* novelisation programme and ended up, more by luck than judgement, writing most of them – seventy-something in all. He has since written a number of *Doctor Who* 'originals' including *Exodus*, part of the opening *Timewyrm* sequence published by Virgin, and *The Eight Doctors*, the first original novel published by BBC Worldwide.

He has written two *Doctor Who* stage plays, one a flop d'estime (great reviews, poor audiences), the other a bit of a pantomime but a modest touring success.

He has also written about a hundred non- *Who* books, fiction and non-fiction for young adults. But nobody ever asks about them.

In over thirty years with the Doctor he has grown older, fatter, greyer and grumpier. But not noticeably wiser.

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Author's Note

Due to the collision of two deadlines, a long-arranged family holiday and a *Doctor Who* delivery date, I found myself presenting Justin Richards with a book that was not only a bit late but a bit short – and immediately leaving the country.

Justin rose to the occasion with some inspired editing, above and beyond the call of duty. I am very grateful for all the hard work that has made this not only a longer but a better book.

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